



Smoke emits from the furnaces in St. Paul, Minn., as temperatures sat below zero Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015. The National Weather Service issued a wind chill advisory for parts of Minnesota. (AP Photo/Star Tribune, Brian Peterson)

Bitter Cold Snap Continues Across Much of US

Page 4

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Greek Debt Crisis: Greece drops key demands as Germany continues to object

D. GATOPOULOS
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece heads to another round of negotiations Friday after dropping key demands for a bailout settlement, but still faced stiff opposition from lead lender Germany, which criticized Athens' latest proposals as a "Trojan horse" designed to dodge its commitments.

Eurozone finance ministers agreed to hold their third meeting on the Greek debt crisis in just over a week after Athens formally requested a six-month extension of loan agreements with rescue creditors that expire this month.

Going back on recent election campaign pledges, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' new left-wing government said it would honor debt obligations and agree to continued supervision from bailout lenders and the European Central Bank.

Late Thursday, Tsipras held telephone conversations with French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel after Germany sharply criticized the Greek offer during preparatory talks in Brussels.

Greek media, including state television, widely quoted a German representative at the talks as saying the Greek offer "rather represents a Trojan horse, intending to get bridge financing and in substance putting an end to the current program."

The comments were confirmed by a senior official in the Greek Finance Ministry who could not be identified because the talks in Brussels were not public. In Berlin, government officials did not comment publicly on the remarks, but told The Associated Press they accurately reflected the German government position.

Germany argues that Greece has failed to provide detailed alternatives to cost-cutting reforms imposed by the previous government that helped the country balance its budget after decades of excessive borrowing. Greek and European markets were largely unaffected by the German response. Europe's Stoxx 50 index rising 0.64 percent, but Athens is under increasing pressure to break the impasse with lenders.

"If there's no agreement in the next few days there is a risk of (a bank run) because liquidity in Greek banks is very limited and there are many who say that capital controls are very close," said Evangelos Sioutis, head of equities at Guardian Trust Securities.

Although Greece emerged from the recession with a primary budget surplus last year, it faces a spike in debt repayment in 2015 with hopes of a full return to markets hit by renewed uncertainty and a resulting surge borrowing rates.

Tsipras ousted traditionally dominant political parties in Jan. 25 elections, promising to scrap bailout agreements and supervision, and demand a massive write down of Greece's 240 billion euro bailout debt so that his government could tackle a dramatic surge in unemployment. □

Happy Ewe Year: Astrological signs bad for the Sheep Year



A woman shops toy sheep for Lunar New Year decorations in Beijing, China. Chinese were seeing in the Year of the Sheep on Thursday, Feb. 19 but with fortune-tellers predicting accidents and an unstable economy and some parents-to-be fretting over the year's reputation for docile kids, it wasn't exactly warming everyone's heart.

(AP Photo/Andy Wong)

LOUISE WATT
Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese were seeing in the Year of the Sheep on Thursday, but with fortune-tellers predicting accidents and an unstable economy and some parents-to-be fretting over the year's reputation for docile kids, it wasn't exactly warming everyone's heart.

This animal sign, which comes once every dozen years, can be said to have an identity crisis. Known variably as the Year of the Goat, Sheep or Ram, the sign's confusion stems from its Chinese character, "yang," which broadly describes any of the ruminating mammals, with or without horns.

Many Chinese prefer to translate it as the "Year of the Sheep" because sheep are more cute and cuddly, and large sheep figures have appeared around the capital's shopping areas in recent weeks.

The goat, however, is more likely to be the original meaning because it was a popular farm animal among Han Chinese who started the zodiac tradition, Huang Yang, a researcher on the roles of sheep and goats in Chinese culture, was quoted by the official Xinhua News agency as saying.

Still, Xinhua is going with "Year of the Sheep" in its English-language reports rather than "Year of the Goat."

The United States also appears to be opting for the fluffier, more gentle animal sign, at least in the U.N. Security Council. A U.S. diplomat at a council meeting earlier this month wished China, this month's council president, a happy "Year of the Sheep."

During the seven-day holiday that started Wednesday, the world's second-biggest economy largely shuts down.

Many mainland Chinese

tuned into the annual New Year's Eve TV gala Wednesday evening, and this year's mascot managed to achieve the problem-solving feat of not being clearly a sheep or a goat.

The previous year, the Year of the Horse, is generally considered to be an auspicious time — never mind that Asian airlines had a string of high-profile disasters.

Astrologists interviewed said this year would bring a volatile economy, more transport accidents and windy natural disasters such as tornadoes in the United States and typhoons to Southeast Asia.

For China, which doesn't get tornadoes, that means air pollution, "coming in with dirty air currents and affecting everyone's lives," said Shanghai-based astrologer Dong Jialing.

"In around June, when it's getting hot in China, the Western economy will fluctuate quite a lot and will be very unstable," Dong predicted. But August or September will mark the start of a very stable economic period.

Feng shui master Clement Chan, who appeared on "America's Next Top Model" as a guest judge in an episode filmed in Macau, said he sees a lot of fire this year, and "fire means accidents." He anticipates plane crashes in the first half, but not as many as in 2014. He also sees a lot of road accidents.

On the positive side, he sees female managers and company leaders doing well this year. "I think you'll see a lot of female world leaders — they'll achieve something great, actually," Chan said. □

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Cold Snap

The Associated Press

Much of the U.S. continued to shiver and suffer in bitter cold Thursday. Temperatures and wind chills plummeted far below in the Midwest, Northeast and even the South — where people were most unaccustomed to the weather-related road hazards, school cancellations, public transportation and airport delays, and runs on supplies at stores.

The cold snap followed snow and ice storms earlier in the week. The low temperatures caused much freezing and refreezing of snow, ice and roads.

Some areas shouldn't expect relief anytime soon — the National Weather Service warned that even colder weather could come later in the week as another cold front drops from Canada. That weather could be some of the coldest since the mid-1990s for parts of the Southeast



Pieces of ice flow over the Canadian 'Horseshoe' Falls in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

(AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Aaron Lynett)

and Mid-Atlantic, forecasters said.

In the Chicago area, several school districts covering hundreds of thousands of students called a "cold day" even though not a single snowflake fell. For

some, it was the fourth such day this winter.

Subzero temperatures combined with wind chills that made it feel about 30 degrees below zero in some areas. School officials said exposure to such

weather for as little as 15 minutes can cause frostbite.

Many students welcomed the day off, but some parents weren't as happy. Rodesha Smith is a single mother who says she must take the day off without pay from her job at a Popeye's fast-food restaurant. "I have to call in sick; I don't get paid," said Smith, 31, who makes \$8.25 an hour. "But it's what I've got. Homeowners struggling with ice dams that prevent melted snow from dripping off their roofs have a sympathetic ear from Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker.

He said Thursday that he and his wife are dealing with ice dams and icicles at their home. During his monthly "Ask the Governor" radio program, he described placing pots and pans, plastic bags and towels around the house to collect leaking water that is then dumped into a bathtub each morning. Baker said he even climbed on his roof at one point to clear off snow.

It's a familiar scenario for thousands of homeowners after storms have left several feet of snow on roofs, leading to costly damage from ice dams and the threat of roof collapses.

The cold might not bother Disney's Queen Elsa, but it's wreaking enough havoc in Kentucky that police announced a joke warrant for the "Frozen" character's arrest.

Police in the rural town of Harlan posted on Facebook: "Suspect is a blonde female last seen wearing a long blue dress and is known to burst into song 'Let it Go!' As you can see by the weather she is very dangerous."

But they soon posted another message, advising residents to take the weather seriously, all kidding aside.

The weather hasn't been good news for the acclaimed restaurant scene in Portland, Maine.

Winters are already slow, with fewer tourists. But after about 80 inches of snow in the city this winter and 18 on-street parking bans, even locals are staying home.

Harding Smith, owner of four restaurants, tells the Portland Press Herald that business is down 15 to 20 percent since mid-January.

High-end restaurants suffer because customers don't want to walk through snow in nice shoes and clothes. But Becky's Diner owner Becky Rand says she's received steady business from police and plow drivers.

In southeastern Virginia, a program helps residents shovel out if they can't do it themselves — but it says it needs volunteers.

Virginia Beach-based Operation Blessing operates the "Snow Buddy" program and has set up a mobile command center. □

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Police arrest suspect in road-rage killing of US mother

KEN RITTER

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Police arrested a suspect Thursday in a road-rage killing of a Las Vegas woman after swarming a home about a

block from the site where she was shot a week ago. The case has received significant attention since police initially said 44-year-old Tammy Meyers was killed by an angry driver who fol-

lowed her home after she gave her teenage daughter a driving lesson.

Police did not release the male suspect's name or discuss his possible involvement in the killing of Meyers. The shirtless suspect was led into a car by an officer and taken to police headquarters for questioning.

Meyers was removed from life support on Valentine's Day as police hunted for a suspect, and donations for her funeral costs quickly poured in to a fundraising site.

Sympathy morphed into skepticism after police revealed that Meyers was not followed home, and instead dropped her daughter off and picked up her 22-year-old son, armed

with his 9 mm handgun, to try to confront the driver who had frightened her earlier.

They went looking for the driver, followed the vehicle and eventually went home. The silver car then showed up outside the Meyers' home and a shoot-out occurred. The mother was shot in the head outside the home.

"I did what I had to do to protect my family," said Brandon Meyers, 22. "Ev-

eryone can think what they have to think. I did it for a reason. And I'd do it for anyone I love."

It's not yet known if the suspect and members of the Meyers family knew each other.

Earlier, as authorities worked to coax the suspect to surrender, Meyers' husband, Robert, arrived and was emotionally distraught as he tried get close to the home that police had surrounded. □



Robert Meyers speaks to media outside his house in Las Vegas. Police arrested a suspect Thursday in the road-rage killing of Meyers' wife Tammy after swarming a home about a block from the site where she was shot a week ago.

(AP Photo/Kimberly Pierceall)

Official:

Mission to retake Mosul to begin in spring

LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The operation to retake Iraq's second largest city from Islamic State militants will likely begin in April or May and will involve about 12 Iraqi brigades, or between 20,000 and 25,000 troops, a senior U.S. military official said Thursday.

Laying out details of the expected Mosul operation for the first time, the official from U.S. Central Command said five Iraqi Army brigades will soon go through coalition training in Iraq to prepare for the mission. Those five would make up the core fighting force that would launch the attack, but they would be supplemented by three smaller brigades serving as reserve forces, along with three Peshmerga brigades who would contain the Islamic State fighters from the north and west. The Peshmerga are Kurdish

forces from northern Iraq.

The official said there also would be a Mosul fighting force, largely made up of former Mosul police and tribal forces, who would have to be ready to go back into the city once the army units clear out the Islamic State fighters.

Included in the force would be a brigade of Iraqi counterterrorism forces who have been trained by U.S. special operations forces. The brigades include roughly 2,000 troops each. The official was not authorized to discuss the operation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The official said the U.S. will provide military support for the operation, including training, air support, intelligence and surveillance. The official said there has been no decision made yet on whether to send in some U.S. ground troops to help call in airstrikes.

Islamic State militants overtook Mosul last June, as the group marched across large sections of Iraq and Syria, sending Iraqi forces fleeing. At this point, officials estimate there are between 1,000 to 2,000 Islamic State insurgents in the city of Mosul. Military leaders have been talking about retaking the city for some time, but they have said they won't launch the operation until the Iraqi troops are ready. The official said they wanted to retake Mosul in the spring, before the summer heat and the holiday month of Ramadan kick in.

"But by the same token, if they're not ready, if the conditions are not set, if all the equipment they need is not physically there and they (aren't) trained to a degree in which they will be successful, we have not closed the door on continuing to slide that to the right," he said. □

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'Superbug' outbreak raising questions about medical tool

ALICIA CHANG
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A "superbug" outbreak suspected in the deaths of two Los Angeles hospital patients is raising disturbing questions about the design of a hard-to-clean medical instrument. At least seven people — two of whom died — have been infected with a potentially lethal, antibiotic-resistant strain of bacteria after undergoing endoscopic procedures at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical

Center between October and January. And more than 170 other patients may have been exposed as well, university officials said. UCLA said the infections may have been transmitted through at least two contaminated endoscopes that were used to diagnose and treat pancreatic and bile-duct problems. The infections occurred even though the instruments had been cleaned according to the manu-



The Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles building is seen in Los Angeles, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015. A "superbug" outbreak suspected in the deaths of two patients at UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles has raised questions about the adequacy of the procedures for disinfecting a medical instrument used on more than a half-million people in the U.S. every year.

(AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

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facturer's instructions, the hospital said. The episode is the latest in a series of outbreaks involving such instruments. "You can very easily do everything right and still have some contamination," said Dr. Deverick Anderson, an infectious-disease expert at Duke University. "We're finding this is a problem, but it's probably one that we don't have a very good solution to right now." Lawrence Muscarella, an infection-control expert, said the recent incidents point to a design flaw that needs to be addressed. An endoscope — or more specifically in this case, a duodenoscope — is a thin, flexible fiber-optic tube that is inserted down the throat to enable a doctor to examine an organ. It typically has a light and a miniature camera. On Thursday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an advisory warning doctors that even when a

manufacturer's cleaning instructions are followed, infectious germs may linger in the devices. Their complex design and tiny parts make complete disinfection extremely difficult, the advisory said. In a statement, the FDA said is trying to determine what more can be done to reduce such infections. But it said that pulling the device from the market would deprive hundreds of thousands of patients of "this beneficial and often life-saving procedure." The company that supplied UCLA's equipment, Olympus Medical Systems Group, did not immediately respond to an email request for comment. The germ is known as carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae, or CRE, and similar outbreaks have been reported in hospitals around the nation. They are difficult to treat because some varieties are resistant to most known antibiotics. □





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US Financial Front:

Wal-Mart gives raises, other employers may have to follow



Wal-Mart President and Chief Executive Officer Doug McMillon speaks during an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2015, in Bentonville, Ark. Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is spending \$1 billion to change how it pays and trains hourly staff in a move it hopes will help reshape the image that it only offers dead-end jobs.

(AP Photo/Gareth Patterson)

NEIL IRWIN

© 2015 New York Times

Wal-Mart is the biggest private employer in America, with 1.3 million U.S. workers. And many of them will soon see a raise, in the latest snippet of corporate news that suggests a firmer job market is starting to enable workers to successfully demand higher pay.

The company said it would pay even its lowest-level workers at least \$9 an hour starting this spring, comfortably above the \$7.25 federal minimum wage, and push that to \$10 in 2016. The company also said it would strengthen a "department manager" role, giving it a minimum wage of \$13 per hour this year and \$15 next, thus offering low-wage hourly workers a clearer path to advancement.

Including similar bumps at Wal-Mart-owned Sam's Clubs, the company expects 500,000 workers to receive a raise at a cost of \$1 billion a year, executives said in a conference call with reporters.

Wal-Mart is surely hoping to get favorable media coverage for its decision to offer raises, but it is worth examining the decision less based on whether the company deserves applause on some moral grounds and more based on the economic forces that led it to act. Indeed, the best possible news would be if Wal-Mart executives made this decision because cold-hearted business strategy compelled it.

A first reaction to Thursday's news may be simply: What took so long?

This has been a challenging 5-year period in which, despite steady economic growth, average hourly wages for nonmanagerial workers have risen around 2 percent a year, barely more than inflation.

There is no doubt that working on the floor of a Wal-Mart store is still going to be a hard job at a pay level that makes it difficult to get by. But these are enormous percentage gains, and the decision by Wal-Mart comes on the heels of a

similar announcement by the health insurer Aetna as well as survey data that also point to a tighter labor market and higher raises in the future.

Back in its 2007 fiscal year, before the recession, Wal-Mart reported \$183,500 in revenue per employee and \$5,938 in profit. Not bad, but by 2014 those numbers had risen by 18 percent and 22 percent.

The company's sales and profits rose nicely in that time while the company kept a lid on its payroll. Gains went to Wal-Mart

shareholders, not Wal-Mart workers.

So what has changed? The simple answer is that the world for employers is very different with a 5.7 percent unemployment rate (the January level) than it was 5 years ago, at 9.8 percent. Finding qualified workers is harder for employers now than it was then, and their workers are at risk of jumping ship if they do not receive pay increases or other improvements.

Apart from pay, Wal-Mart executives said in their conference call with reporters

that they were revising their employee scheduling policies so that workers could have more predictability in their work schedules and more easily get time off when they needed it, such as for a doctor's appointment.

The giant question now is not whether there will be some meaningful wage gains in 2015; beyond the anecdotal evidence from Wal-Mart and Aetna, the collapse in oil prices means even modest pay increases will translate into quite large inflation-adjusted raises. □



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Key Ukraine town under rebel control, separatists celebrate

**PETER LEONARD
DALTON BENNETT
Associated Press
DEBALTSEVE, Ukraine (AP)** — For the rebel fighters who seized control of this strategic town, Thursday was a day of jubilation and bragging of victory. The retreating Ukrainian soldiers were grim, stunned and relieved to have escaped with their lives as the scope of their losses became clearer: at least 13 dead and hundreds missing, captured or wounded. Rebel fighters roamed the debris-littered streets of Debaltseve, laughing, hug-

ging and posing for photos a day after the fall of the furiously contested railway hub. Associated Press journalists found its neighborhoods destroyed and all under the control of the rebels. On the road out of town, dozens of Ukrainian military vehicles, many riddled with bullet holes and with their windshields smashed, were heading to the government-held city of Artemivsk. The soldiers inside described weeks of harrowing rebel shelling, followed by a hasty retreat.



A pro-Russia rebel smokes as he walks in Debaltseve, eastern Ukraine on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015. After weeks of relentless fighting, the embattled Ukrainian rail hub of Debaltseve fell Wednesday to Russia-backed separatists, who hoisted a flag in triumph over the town. The Ukrainian president confirmed that he had ordered troops to pull out and the rebels reported taking hundreds of soldiers captive. (AP Photo/ Peter Leonard)

"We left under heavy fire, driving on back roads," said a soldier who gave only his first name, Andrei. "As we were leaving, we were attacked by artillery and grenade launchers. We came under repeated attack by tanks and assault groups." As rebels waved separatist flags, Nikolai Kozitsyn, a Russian Cossack leader and prominent warlord in the rebel-controlled east, drove around in a Humvee-like vehicle captured from Ukrainian troops. All around lay the wrecked remains of Ukrainian armored vehicles. Rebel fighters, many of them Cossacks, searched through the bunkers and tents of an abandoned military encampment, looking to salvage equipment and

clothing left behind. Two rebel fighters inspected an abandoned tank, declaring it a "gift" from the Ukrainian army. They then grabbed a bloodied blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flag and ground it into the frozen earth with their boots. But in a reminder of the dangers, one vehicle carrying Cossacks hit a land mine, killing one rebel fighter and wounding another. Cossacks, who spearheaded imperial Russia's expansion and helped guard its far-flung outposts, trace their historic roots to both Ukraine and southern Russia. They faced persecution under Bolshevik rule but resurfaced after the 1991 Soviet collapse and are now recognized as an ethnic group who consider

themselves descendants of the czarist-era horsemen. By Thursday, 90 percent of government forces had been withdrawn, a military spokesman said, though he gave no precise figure. Late Wednesday, President Petro Poroshenko said 2,475 soldiers were safely pulled out. The official toll stood at 13 soldiers killed, 157 wounded, more than 90 captured and at least 82 missing. But retreating soldiers described many more killed during a hasty and disorderly withdrawal, and the death toll was likely to rise. Rebel leaders also claimed the Ukrainian casualties were far higher and bragged about seizing large numbers of heavy weapons abandoned by the government forces. □



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French government survives rebel no-confidence vote



French Prime Minister Manuel Valls gestures as he speaks prior to a parliamentary vote of confidence over the government's economic reform at the French National Assembly, Paris, Thursday, Feb 19, 2015.

(AP Photo/Jacques Brinnon)

SYLVIE CORBET
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's prime minister survived a no-confidence vote Thursday called after rebel lawmakers in his Socialist Party teamed up with conservatives to fight his pro-business policies. A total of 234 lawmakers voted for the censure motion that triggered a political crisis and forced Prime Minister Manuel Valls to defend his economic views. The count was far below the 289 needed for the motion to pass and bring down the government. The plan to free up labor rules and regulations, authored by 37-year-old Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron, has improbably put some Socialist lawmakers in the same camp as their most conservative counterparts. Valls this week forced through the bill without a vote by invoking rarely

used special powers. That drew a censure motion by the conservative opposition. "You don't play dice with such an important bill for our country," the prime minister said in a speech defending his policies ahead of the vote—and his use of special powers to push through the measure. "You don't take risks in the face of the irresponsibility and the immaturity of some," he said, referring to the rebel Socialists. The bill includes a patchwork of measures including allowing more stores to open on Sundays and evenings, making it easier for employers to lay off workers and fostering greater competition in regulated professions such as auctioneers and notaries. Confrontation between the government and rebel lawmakers may not be over. The bill still has to go to the Senate and will ulti-

mately return to the Assembly where the same scenario could play out again. France's Socialist party is fractured between a pro-business faction—including Valls and Macron — and others who want to protect French industry and the country's considerable social and health benefits. The battle in Parliament comes as statistics released Thursday show that inflation in France turned negative last month for the first time since October 2009, with prices falling 0.4 percent from a year earlier.

Marc Touati, a French economist and proponent of "shock therapy" for his country, said it was disturbing that the government could not even accomplish what he described as "a mini-reform." "It cannot pass through the normal way, which shows that France, unfortunately, is un-reformable. That is very worrying and sends a very bad signal to the world" at a time when France's growth forecast is below 1 percent for 2015. "When you make a comparison to the sacrifices

made by the Spanish, Germans, Italians, Portuguese and Irish ... I'm worried about France," he said. Facing a lagging economy and an unemployment rate above 10 percent, French President Francois Hollande changed course on his leftwing program in January 2014 when he announced a plan to lower taxes and spur employment. He promised to ease payroll taxes by up to 40 billion euros (\$50 billion) by 2017 if businesses would hire, although the jobless rate has hardly budged. □

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Some signs of tension emerge among Islamic State militants

ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — As the Islamic State group tries to expand and take root across the Middle East, it is struggling in Syria — part of its heartland — where it has stalled or even lost ground while fighting multiple enemies on several fronts.

Signs of tension and power struggles are emerging among the ranks of its foreign fighters.

The extremists remain a formidable force, and the group's hold on about a third of Iraq and Syria remains firm. But it appears to be on the defensive in Syria for the first time since it swept through the territory last year and is suffering from months of U.S.-led coalition airstrikes and the

myriad factions fighting it on the ground.

"They are struggling with new challenges that did not exist before," said Lina Khatib, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

Kurdish forces dealt the Islamic State its heaviest setback by driving it from the border town of Kobani in northern Syria last month. Since then, those forces have joined with moderate Syrian rebels to take back about 215 villages in the same area, according to Kurdish commanders and activists, including the Britain-based monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The gains have strained supply lines between the Islamic State group's west-



Iraqi security forces hold a flag of the Islamic State group they captured during an operation outside Amirli, north of Baghdad, Iraq. The Islamic State group may be sprouting tentacles across the region but it is struggling in Syria, part of its heartland, where it has stalled or even lost ground in fighting with multiple enemies on multiple fronts. There are signs of tensions and power struggles emerging among its ranks of foreign jihadis.

(AP Photo)

ernmost strongholds in Aleppo province from its core territory in eastern Syria. The Kurdish-rebel forces are now expected to take the fight to some of those strongholds, particularly the large towns of Minbij and Jarablus, as well as Tal Abyad, a border crossing with Turkey that is a major

avenue for commerce for the extremists.

Around the town of al-Bab, one of the IS group's westernmost strongholds, the extremists are making tactical withdrawals. Residents have noted a thinner militant presence in al-Bab.

The militants are also finding themselves bogged

down in costly battles with the government forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The extremist group, also known as ISIS or ISIL, has been stuck in fierce fighting with the Syrian army near the Deir el-Zour air base, the last major Syrian military stronghold in the eastern province.

It is too early to call the shifts a turning point, but they represent the slow grind of the international campaign against the Islamic State group, which long seemed unconquerable as it seized territory stretching from outside the city of Aleppo in northern Syria's at one end to the outskirts of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad at the other.

In Iraq, the combination of coalition airstrikes, Kurdish forces, Shiite militias and Iraqi troops have pushed IS back around the edges, but the militants succeeded this week in taking new territory for the first time in months. □

US Embassy:

Turkey, US sign deal to train, arm Syrian rebels

DESMOND BUTLER
Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey and the United States signed an agreement Thursday to train and arm Syrian rebels fighting the Islamic State group, said the U.S. Embassy in Ankara.

The two countries have been in talks about such a pact for several months. The deal was signed Thursday evening by U.S. Ambassador John Bass and Turkish Foreign Ministry undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu, said Embassy spokesman Joe Wierichs. He gave no further details.

Sinirlioglu called the deal "an important step" in

the strategic partnership between Turkey and the United States, according to Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency.

The Turkish government has said the training by U.S. and Turkish soldiers could begin as early as next month at a base in the central Anatolian city of Kirsehir, and involve hundreds of Syrian fighters in the first year. The U.S. has said the goal is to go after the Islamic State group, but Turkish officials have suggested that the trained rebels could also target the Syrian government of President Bashar Assad.

With its 750 mile border on

Syria, Turkey is a key part of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State group. But negotiations with the U.S. over what to do about the Islamic militants have been fraught with disagreement — with Turkey insisting that the coalition needs to also target the Assad government.

On Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in a press conference that Turkey expected that the trained rebels will also fight the Syrian regime. Turkey is already training Kurdish Peshmerga fighters in Northern Iraq, who have been battling Islamic State militants. □

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Testy relations between Uruguay and 6 Guantanamo detainees

L. HABERKORN
Associated Press

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (AP) — Just two months ago, Uruguay welcomed six Guantanamo detainees for resettlement as a humanitarian gesture, and relations have already gotten a little testy.

One of the former prisoners complained in a TV interview last week that he and his five colleagues had given up one jail only to find themselves in another. Uruguayan President Jose Mujica, who spearheaded the plan to bring the men to this South American nation, shot back by questioning the men's willingness to work.

The men had been held for more than a dozen years at the U.S. Navy base in Cuba before they were brought to Montevideo in December. Mujica said they would be given help getting established in a country of 3.3 million people with a total Muslim population of perhaps 300. The government has offered the former detainees a residential facility to study Spanish, learn about Uruguayan culture and integrate to their new home. But Syrian refugee Abu Wa'el Dhiab raised a stir by complaining last week that the men have "walked out of a prison to enter another one." He also made a brief trip to neighboring Argentina saying he planned to ask that it give asylum to Guantanamo prisoners. In the TV interview, Dhiab expressed thanks to Uruguayans for taking the men in, but said there should be a plan for helping the ex-



Former Guantanamo detainee Abu Wa'el Dhiab, one of the Syrian refugees recently released from Guantanamo and now living in Uruguay speaks during an interview, in Buenos Aires Argentina. Dhiab said he was there to ask the Argentine government to grant asylum to his former fellow inmates still being held at the U.S. prison facility in Cuba.

(AP Photo/Barricada TV)

detainees, who need "their families, a home, a job and some sort of income that allows them to build a future."

A labor union that has been helping the men said, however, that they have turned down job offers.

Mujica then visited the home where five of the six men are staying and asked

them to start working. After his visit, the president said on his radio program that the former detainees are far from the ancestors of Uruguayans, who he said were gritty, hard-working immigrants.

"If these people were humble people of the desert, poor people, they'd surely be stronger and more

primitive, but they're not," Mujica said of the former prisoners. "Through their hands, features and family histories, it seems to me that they're middle class." Some opposition lawmakers have opposed the resettlement plan from the beginning, but one legislator, Sen. Ope Pasquet of the Colorado Party, de-

fended the men Wednesday. "The Guantanamo six were jailed for more than 10 years in dreadful conditions," he wrote on his Twitter account. "The psychological damage must be terrible. Making them work now? Premature."

The six men were detained as suspected militants with ties to al-Qaeda in 2002 but were never charged. They had been cleared for release since 2009 but could not be sent home and the U.S. struggled to find countries willing to take them.

While at Guantanamo, Dhiab was at the center of a legal battle in U.S. courts over the military's use of force-feeding. When he arrived in Uruguay, he was reportedly weak as a result of repeated hunger strikes. In recent videos, Dhiab appears thin but not overly so. Since January 2002, when the Guantanamo detention center opened, about 620 prisoners have been released or transferred, with the vast majority making no public statements or appearances. □

Criminal says he donated millions to D.R. ex-president

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — A convicted drug trafficker and former captain of the Dominican Republic's army told a local TV station Thursday that he donated millions of dollars to former president Leonel Fernandez.

A man who identified himself as Quirino Ernesto Paulino told TV station Teleradio America on a video call that he donated some \$4.6

million in cash from 2002 to 2004 that was delivered in suitcases.

Fernandez was elected president for a second time in 2004 after serving from 1996 to 2002.

Paulino was arrested in December 2004 following the seizure of nearly 1,400 kilograms (3,100 pounds) of cocaine, the largest ever at that time.

He was extradited to the United States in 2005 on

charges of money laundering and of allegedly importing 33 tons (30 metric tons) of cocaine into that country.

He served a 10-year sentence following a plea deal and remains in the U.S. to testify in other cases.

Fernandez said in a brief statement that Paulino's comments were part of a campaign to discredit him. "Those attacks highlight the determination of my

administration in confronting international organized crime groups, which it extradited as required by law," he said.

The comments come as the Dominican Republic prepares to hold general elections next year.

Fernandez has not said whether he will seek to run again, although supporters and members of his party have been promoting him as a potential candidate. □

Coca-Cola caught up in southern Mexico protest, 10 injured

MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Ten people were injured in southern Mexico after what police described as an attempt to attack the Coca-Cola company's offices in the southern state of Guerrero.

The violence occurred in the state capital of Chilpancingo late Wednesday.

day.

The Guerrero state government said protesters tried to attack the Coke offices "to damage the facilities." It said the demonstrators, including teachers' college students and unionized teachers, threw gasoline bombs, and a state police officer was burned. Three other policemen were injured, along with

two reporters and four protesters.

The demonstrators briefly took two company employees hostage. The Coca Cola Femsa company — Mexico's largest Coke bottler — confirmed that, saying in a statement that "fortunately, our employees are well."

The company did not say under what conditions the

employees were released. But Josefina Saucedo, a member of the radical Guerrero state teachers' union that has been leading the protests, said the Coca Cola workers were seized in order to exchange them for five protesters who police had arrested earlier.

Local media said those protesters had been ar-

rested for taking Coke products from hijacked delivery trucks, but the company would not confirm that.

Saucedo also claimed police attacked the protesters first in an attempt to disband a protest camp that has occupied part of the city's central square for months, a charge the state government denied. □

Venezuela allows sale of dollars at near-black market rate

HANNAH DREIER

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela

(AP) — Venezuelans lined up Thursday for their first chance in years to change bolivars into dollars without having to justify why they need foreign currency.

The socialist South American country launched a new exchange system last week that allows individuals and businesses to circumvent decade-old currency controls and legally buy greenbacks. Last week, the system aimed at easing the country's crippling economic crisis went into effect for foreign credit cards. On Thursday, Venezuelans got their first crack at legally trading local currency for paper dollars at a rate approaching the one used on the country's black market.

People waited for hours in the afternoon heat to buy dollars at a normally empty currency exchange house in downtown Caracas. Many said they wanted to protect their savings from Venezuela's 68 percent inflation, or to travel abroad.

The new market sets the exchange rate at about 170 bolivars to the dollar. That compares with rates of 6.3 or 12 bolivars per

side the exchange house at 8 a.m. The former importer hopes to use the foreign currency to visit his granddaughters in Miami,

after waiting four hours. "I'm going to buy as much as they let me."

Several dozen people behind him, 85-year-old re-

livia. At the new exchange rate, his wad of bolivars would net just a little more than \$10.

Part of the reason people are unsure about their money's value is that for years the government has allowed Venezuelans to change bolivars at a rate of 6.3 to the dollar when they travel abroad, or when they can show that they need dollars for business purposes. Under that earlier scheme, Juvenal's 1,800 bolivars would have equaled nearly \$300.

But with the government in the throes of a cash crunch, officials have begun limiting Venezuelan's ability to change bolivars when they leave the country. So Juvenal said he was happy for a chance to buy dollars, even at a dramatically weaker rate.

Outside, a security guard not authorized to speak to the media chuckled at the scene, calling it "madness."

He plans to convert his savings into dollars, too, but he's waiting until next week. □



A cleaning woman walks by replicas of Venezuela's currency bills, hung in a hallway at the Central bank office building in Caracas, Venezuela. The South American country debuted a new exchange system last week aimed at easing the country's economic crisis, and on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015, Venezuelans got their first crack at trading local cash for paper dollars at banks and money exchangers. (AP Photo/Ariana Cubillos)

dollar Venezuela uses for priority imports, and 190 bolivars on the black market.

Luis Silva, 78, lined up out-

and buy goods online that he can't find in shortage-plagued Venezuela.

"I haven't seen a dollar in years," he said, still cheery

tired professor Jose Juvenal clutched 1,800 in bolivars that he hoped would buy enough dollars to travel to his native La Paz, Bo-

Cuba temporarily cuts price of civilian Internet access

A. RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba has temporarily reduced the hourly charge for using state-run Internet cafes in the country's first small but substantive public move to increase online access since the declaration of détente with the U.S.

President Barack Obama said late last year that Cuba had promised to increase Internet access, al-

though U.S. and Cuban officials have since provided few specifics.

Virtually all home connections remain illegal in Cuba and getting online at government centers remains prohibitively expensive. Post-discount, an hour costs roughly 10 percent of the average monthly salary of \$20.

Users nonetheless hailed the decision to cut the rate by 50 percent until April 10.

State centers previously charged \$4.50 an hour. The promotion gives Cubans two hours and 16 minutes for \$5. "The cut is something that's really positive," said Dimas Bencomo, an artist who goes nearly every day to one of the 155 cyber-cafes opened in 2013. "They should be charging even less and it would be much better to have a connection in my house."

Cuba announced last

month that it plans to open an additional 136 Internet centers around the country this year. The price doesn't appear to have changed in hotels, which charge \$8 an hour. The price cut that began Feb. 10 has received virtually no publicity in state media and news of it spread by word of mouth. It doesn't appear to have dramatically increased demand at state cyber-centers. The Cuban

government blames the island's lack of connectivity on technical limits resulting from the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. Independent experts point out that Cuba is connected to Venezuela by a high-speed fiber-optic cable and blame the lack of access on the government's underfunding of telecommunications infrastructure and its fear of the Internet as a tool for social change. □



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the time to prepare an extra special menu of international delights along with tried and true favorites just for you. Now that you are relaxed and feelin' fine, start off with a fabulous appetizer. If you

beef burgers up to 10oz topped with tangy seasonings and sauces as well as fresh vegetable assortments according to each theme. Superb entrees like Beer Battered Alaskan Cod, Norwegian Salmon,

vor continues throughout this exclusive international menu as pulled pork and pulled chicken, melt off the bone ribs, and half chicken exquisitely seasoned in rub make their way out of the smoke house carry with them hickory barbeque sauces, chipotles, southern style mustard sauce and a spicy jalapeño here and there to liven things up in the Hard Rock Café tradition. Hard Rock Café is ready to bring some good old Down South Tennessee flavor to the Aruban night life scene. Enjoy a rustically romantic dinner that will definitely light your fire and have you coming back for more before your vacation ends. The best of the best live bands help set



just can't decide then we suggest a Jumbo Combo with a little bit of this and a little bit of that to open the appetite as happy hour continues. On the lighter size Hard Rock café offers plenty of salads that tease your palette with the tropical sensation of citrus to sweet all in one. Topped off with smoky goodness of chicken breast and or bacon we toss in crisp veggies and possibly grilled shrimp or grilled salmon to your liking.

Legendary burgers range from the healthy and lean choices of chicken, turkey, or veggie to awesome all

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Sidebar is the newest restaurant on Aruba, and oh boy, it is a beauty! Unique in a trendy, sassy and sexy way, it is ready to welcome all of you.



Common ground and denominating factor of the guests includes the enjoyment of life, in particular the good things, such as great bistro food, wonderful drinks and a relaxed, happy atmosphere. Sidebar is the name of a stylish, hip restaurant on the side of the Renaissance Marketplace; just hop inside, sit at the bar or on the amazing porch and enjoy – the party at Sidebar starts at 8 am and goes on until midnight.

At Sidebar you can sit in a booth, on a lounge chair, on a bar stool or stand at a cocktail table. Side Bar is all about options, so go and check it out on the far end corner of the Renaissance Marketplace.

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Jim and Angela Honored at the Divi Village Resort

EAGLE BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice couple, whom are loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba, at the Divi Village Resort, as Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 20-or-more consecutive years.

The honorees were Mr. Jim and Mrs. Angela Nestrick from Bonita Springs. Jim and Angela are loyal members of the Divi Village Resort, and they love the Island very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants and the diversity of the island. Aruba feels like a second home and the people are like a family to them. The certificate was



presented by Mrs. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with representatives of the Divi Village Resort. □





Luke Donald of England tees off on the 12th hole during the first round of the Northern Trust Open golf tournament at Riviera Country Club in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

Associated Press

Goosen, Vijay Singh among leaders at Riviera

DOUG FERGUSON

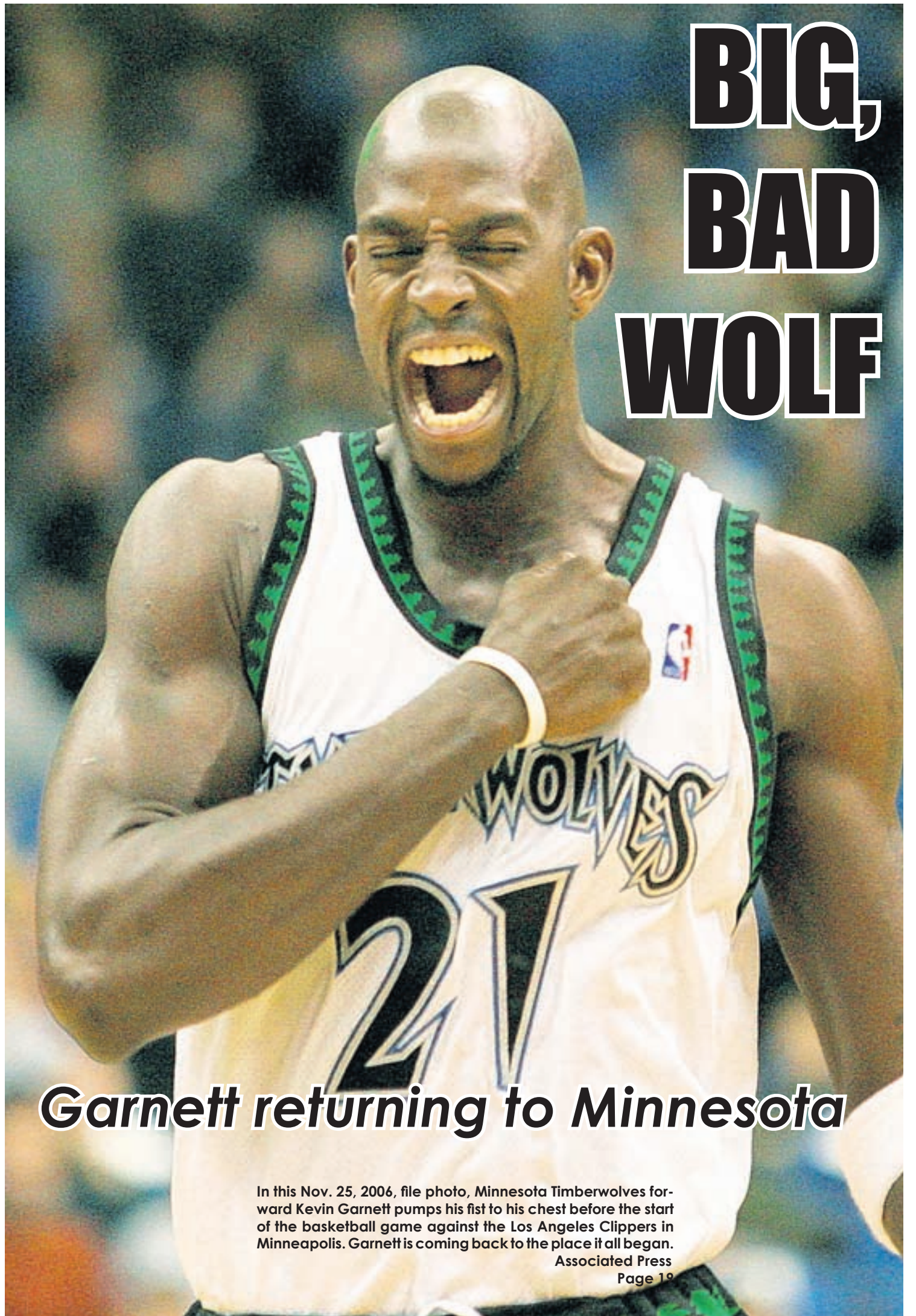
AP Golf Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Retief Goosen and Vijay Singh, among the top five players in the world a decade ago, were part of a five-way tie for the lead in the Northern Trust Open in what amounted to "throw-back Thursday" at Riviera. The 51-year-old Singh, who plays the occasional Champions Tour event, picked up four birdies on the back nine for a 5-under 66, his lowest opening round on the PGA Tour since the 2012 McGladrey Classic. The three-time major champion and former world No. 1 has not won since 2008.

Goosen, a two-time U.S. Open champion who turned 47 this month, was slowed by a pair of sloppy bogeys early on the back nine until he made a pair of late birdies to join Singh at 66. Goosen hasn't won since 2009.

They played in the game group with 28-year-old Brian Harman, who shot a 78. "It was nice to see the two old boys play pretty good," Goosen said.

Continued on Next Page



BIG, BAD WOLF

Garnett returning to Minnesota

In this Nov. 25, 2006, file photo, Minnesota Timberwolves forward Kevin Garnett pumps his fist to his chest before the start of the basketball game against the Los Angeles Clippers in Minneapolis. Garnett is coming back to the place it all began.

Associated Press

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Halep advances to semifinal against Wozniacki in Dubai

SANDRA HARWITT
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Top-seeded

Simona Halep needed five match points before finally defeating sixth-seeded Ekaterina Makarova 6-3, 1-6, 7-5 in the quarterfinals at the Dubai Tennis Championships on Thursday.

"I was a little bit nervous to finish," said Halep, who served for the match at 5-3 in the third set. "Sometimes you feel like that. So you have to stay very focused and to fight for every point."

Halep's victory at Dubai Tennis Stadium set up a semifinal match against third-seeded Caroline Wozniacki, a former Dubai



Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark returns the ball to Flavia Pennetta of Italy during a quarterfinal match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015. Associated Press

champion in 2011.

Wozniacki, who has been nursing a cold all week, beat 10th-seeded Flavia Pennetta of Italy 7-5, 6-0, winning the last eight games.

"With the way I've been feeling this week I was trying to save as much energy as I can," the Dane said. "I definitely very pleased with the way I've fought and still managed to win."

For the second consecutive week,

Karolina Pliskova advanced to the semifinals of a tournament by beating Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic.

Pliskova recovered from a set and a service break down to win 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-1.

The 18-year-old Pliskova, seeded 17th, defeated Safarova in straight sets last week in Antwerp, Belgium. She will next face unseeded Garbine Muguruza.

The 24th-ranked Muguruza beat 13th-seeded Carla Suarez Navarro 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-3 in an all-Spanish match. Suarez Navarro, who withdrew from the final in Antwerp with a neck injury, was the player who defeated Pliskova in last week's semifinals.

"I had three set points in the first set so I was sad," Muguruza said. "I said if I want to win this match I cannot play bad."

I knew I would have options to win the match if I won the second set." □



Vijay Singh of Fiji tees off on the 12th hole during the first round of the Northern Trust Open golf tournament at Riviera Country Club in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

Continued from Page 17

Vijay Singh

Pebble Beach runner-up Nick Watney, competing for the fifth straight week, kept up his form with an eagle on the opening hole on his way to a 66. James Hahn and Daniel Summerhays joined them in the

lead among early starters on an overcast morning that turned into mild sunshine, typical of the weather on this wondrous West Coast Swing.

Pebble Beach winner Brandt Snedeker and de-

fending champion Bubba Watson were among the late starters.

Riviera is in superb shape this year and conditions were ideal, which speaks to the golf course. No one managed better than 66, while three players failed to break 80. One of them was Scott Piercy, who became this year's face of the par-4 10th hole. He began his round by going from the front bunker to the back bunker to the front bunker to the back bunker before a great putt for double bogey.

Carlos Ortiz of Mexico, who had a 67, summed up the 312-yard hole this way: "I've never seen a par 4 that short that hard."

Singh didn't make everything, but he made enough. He moved into a share of the lead with a 35-footer from just off the 15th green, followed by a

15-foot birdie putt on the par-3 16th hole. He finished strong except for missing a pair of birdie putts inside 12 feet.

"I'm finally not hurting as much as I did the last five years," Singh said. "That's a big part of playing good golf. You're not hurting, you can go out and play and you're comfortable. Right now, nothing hurts."

The golf swing feels good, and I'm happy to be playing."

For all his birdies, Goosen was most pleased with a pair of par saves — from 8 feet on No. 2 and 10 feet on No. 8. After a perfect wedge to 3 feet on the 10th hole for birdie, he went for the green in two on the par-5 11th hole and paid for it by missing well left and drawing a tough life. He couldn't hold the green with his long pitch and failed to get up-and-

down, making bogey. Then, he three-putted from 20 feet for bogey.

Two late birdies gave him a score he felt he deserved.

Summerhays and Hahn each joined the leaders late by finishing their rounds with three straight birdies. Watney ran off three straight birdies on his front nine and made the turn in 30, but he played the back nine in even par. Still, he was happy to be in at 66.

Watney had the lead briefly on the front nine at Pebble Beach last week until a pair of bogeys, and he never caught up to Snedeker.

Still, it was a progress, and he might be on his way to getting yet another chance.

"I was disappointed for maybe 12 hours," Watney said about Pebble Beach. "But overall, it was almost all positive and onto the next week." □

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Kevin Garnett returning to Minnesota in deadline deal

By JON KRAWCZYNSKI
AP Basketball Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) -- Kevin Garnett is coming back to the place it all began. And it won't be for just one final victory lap.

The Minnesota Timberwolves are sending forward Thaddeus Young to the Brooklyn Nets for Garnett, two people with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press. The people spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been officially announced. The Wolves also want to sign the 38-year-old Garnett to a new two-year deal this summer after his current deal expires, according to one of the people. That ensures the Wolves will have him on the court as a veteran mentor for a young roster that includes point guard Ricky Rubio, No. 1 overall draft pick Andrew Wiggins, Zach LaVine, Shabazz Muhammad and Gorgui Dieng.

"I'm going to be here with my notebook and see whatever he does," Rubio said. "I remember watching him with the Timberwolves and the Boston Celtics winning a championship, playing against him was something special. You could see players were afraid of him. That means he was tough, but he was a winner. No matter what a team needs to do, he did it." The Timberwolves and Nets had been discussing the possibility of bringing Garnett back to Minnesota for some time leading up to the trade deadline on Thursday, but the former face of the franchise held all the leverage because he is one of the few veterans in the league with a full

no-trade clause in his contract.

Garnett spent his first 12 seasons in Minnesota. He guided the Timberwolves to the only eight playoff appearances in franchise history and won the MVP award while leading them to the Western Conference finals in 2004.

The Wolves traded Garnett to Boston in 2007 and the Celtics won a championship in his first season there. Garnett remained with Boston until he was dealt along with Celtics mainstay Paul Pierce to Brooklyn on the night of the 2013 draft. "When you think of the Timberwolves, you think of Kevin Garnett," Wiggins said. "That's the first thing that comes up."

After winning a title in Boston, Garnett is nearing the end of a brilliant career and now could finish it in front of a crowd that continues to adore him. He continued to receive standing ovations from the crowd every time he returned with the Celtics and Nets, and his No. 21 jersey is still regularly seen on the backs of fans at Target Center on most nights.

"I'm excited to just get the chance to work with him, be on the same team with him and see how he carries himself," Wiggins said. In Minnesota, he will be reunited with Flip Saunders, who coached him for 10 years and made his own return to the organization before last season as president of basketball operations. Saunders named himself coach before this season and assistant coach Sam Mitchell is one of Garnett's favorite former teammates.

Pierce spent just a year in

Brooklyn and now Garnett is gone too, with the Nets getting a solid replacement in Young, who has played much better as the season went on.

"Thanks (at)MNTimberwolves organization and fans for welcoming my family and I. We really appreciate you all," Young tweeted. □



In this March 18, 2007, file photo, Minnesota Timberwolves' Kevin Garnett (21) goes to the hoop in the second quarter of their NBA basketball game against the Los Angeles Lakers in Los Angeles. Associated Press

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Tatar gives Wings SO win over 'Hawks

The Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Tomas Tatar scored in regulation and in the shootout, leading the Detroit Red Wings to a 3-2 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks on Wednesday night.

Gustav Nyquist also scored in the tiebreaker for Detroit, which won for just the third time in 11 shootouts this season. Darren Helm had a goal and an assist, and Jimmy Howard made 32 saves through overtime.

Jonathan Toews gave Chicago the lead with a goal in the first round of the shootout, but Patrick Kane's backhand shot went off the crossbar, and Patrick Sharp was stopped by Howard on the final attempt.

Brandon Saad and Kris Versteeg scored in regulation for Chicago, and Corey Crawford had 26 saves.

SENATORS 4, CANADIENS 2 OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Andrew Hammond made 42 saves in his first NHL start, helping Ottawa to a win over Montreal.

Milan Michalek, Jean-Gabriel Pageau, Mark Stone and Kyle Turris, scored for the Senators. Defenseman Erik Karlsson had two assists for the fourth straight game.

Hammond stopped the first 26 shots he faced.

Dustin Tokarski made 35 saves, and Max Pacioretty and Nathan Beaulieu had goals for the Canadiens.

Hammond was called into action Monday to replace starter Robin Lehner, who was hurt in the second period against Carolina. Lehner was unable to play Wednesday. With Craig Anderson already out with a hand injury, Hammond got the start.

The Senators opened the third period with a 2-1 lead before Stone gave them some insurance with a power-play goal at 9:27.

WILD 3, FLAMES 2, OT CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Mikko Koivu scored 1:50 into overtime to give Minnesota a victory over Calgary.

Alone in the slot, Koivu took a pass from Charlie Coyle and moved in on Jonas



The Detroit Red Wings celebrate their 3-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks after a shootout period of an NHL hockey game Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015, in Chicago.

Associated Press

Hiller. Koivu put a shot over the goalie's shoulder for his ninth goal this season. Devan Dubnyk made 35 saves to improve to 11-2-1 since being acquired from Arizona.

The Wild improved to 5-7 in overtime. The Flames fell to 11-4.

Justin Fontaine and Matt Dumba scored in regulation for Minnesota (29-21-7). The Wild have been one of the NHL's hottest teams, going 11-2-2 in their last 15. They have climbed within one point of the San Jose Sharks, who hold the second wild card spot in the Western Conference.

Jiri Hudler and Lance Bouma scored for Calgary (32-

22-4), which is 6-2-1 in its last nine. The Flames moved into sole possession of second place in the Pacific Division, one point ahead of Vancouver.

LIGHTNING 4, DUCKS 1 ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Steven Stamkos capped Tampa Bay's four-goal second period with his 31st of the season, and the Lightning stormed past Anaheim.

Anton Stralman, Tyler Johnson and Nikita Kucherov also scored, and Ben Bishop made 24 saves for the Lightning, who overtook Anaheim and the New York Islanders by a point in the overall standings and tied Montreal and St. Louis for second behind Nashville.

Patrick Maroon scored for the Ducks, who allowed at least four goals for the fourth time in five games. John Gibson stopped 28 shots in place of Frederik Andersen, who missed his fourth straight game due to an upper body injury.

KINGS 4, AVALANCHE 1 DENVER (AP) — Jeff Carter scored twice and Jonathan Quick stopped 42 shots, helping Los Angeles extend its winning streak to six games with a victory over Colorado.

Tyler Toffoli and Dustin Brown also scored for the defending Stanley Cup champion Kings, who are back in playoff contention after scuffling a few weeks

ago.

Gabriel Landeskog had the lone goal for the Avalanche, which went 2-2 during a four-game homestand and lost more ground in the standings.

Trailing by two goals, Colorado pulled Semyon Varlamov for an extra skater with just under three minutes remaining. But Alex Tanguay drew a penalty with 1:39 remaining to negate the advantage. Varlamov stayed on the bench, leading to Carter's empty-net goal with 52.3 seconds left.

Varlamov made 22 saves in his 14th straight start. He is 6-6-2 during that stretch. Los Angeles has outscored teams 23-12 during its six-game winning streak.

OILERS 4, BRUINS 3, SO EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) — Oilers defenseman Martin Marincin scored the lone shootout goal in the 12th round, and Edmonton snapped a two game skid with a victory over struggling Boston.

The teams had gone 0 for 23 in the tiebreaker before Marincin broke the deadlock. He has no goals and one assist in 17 games this season with Edmonton.

Nail Yakupov, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Teddy Purcell scored in regulation for the Oilers (17-32-10), who broke a 13-game losing streak against Boston, dating to 2001.

Loui Eriksson, Reilly Smith and David Pastrnak had goals for the Bruins (28-20-9), who have lost five in a row. □

Kersey's death linked to blood clot that traveled to lungs

ANNE M. PETERSON

AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) — The state medical examiner says former Portland Trail Blazers player Jerome Kersey died from a blood clot that traveled from his left calf to his lungs.

The determination by the medical examiner Thursday came a day after Kersey died at 52. Kersey had minor surgery on his knee last Friday.

He appeared Tuesday with fellow former Blazers Terry

Porter Brian Grant at a Portland high school in celebration of African American History Month. He visited the team offices hours before his death.

Kersey helped the Trail Blazers twice reach the NBA Finals before he won a title with the San Antonio Spurs in 1999. Kersey averaged 10.3 points and 5.5 rebounds in 17 seasons in the NBA with Portland, Golden State, the Los Angeles Lakers, Seattle, San Antonio and Milwaukee. □



In this July 16, 2003, file photo, Portland Trail Blazers general manager John Nash, left, chats with assistant coach Jerome Kersey after the NBA basketball team's practice in Tualatin, Ore.

Associated Press

Elway: Broncos want Manning back, still awaiting word

By EDDIE PELLIS

AP National Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) -- Asked who he thinks Denver's quarterback will be next season, John Elway left no doubt: Peyton Manning. Asked about how Manning's contract might read if he does return, Elway was less clear: "The bottom line is, I don't like to get into anyone's contract."

Elway's deflection of the contract question Thursday left open the possibility that negotiations over dollars could be holding up a final decision as Manning considers returning for a fourth season in Denver. Manning is scheduled to make \$19 million next season, and the Broncos could use some extra cap room as they prepare to sign free agent wide receiver Demaryius Thomas and shore up their offensive and defensive lines.

Manning and Elway met

last week in Denver. Several outlets reported that Manning told the Broncos he wanted to return. But the visit came and went without an announcement. Elway confirmed reports that Manning is feeling better than he did when the Broncos lost in the divisional playoffs nearly six weeks ago, when a thigh injury kept him at less than 100 percent.

"Physically, he said he felt much better," Elway said. And so, in Elway's mind, the ball remains in Manning's court, and the Broncos are moving on as if he'll be the quarterback.

Elway said new coach Gary Kubiak's offense reminds him of the system he ran during the final, Super Bowl-winning years of his career. Makes sense, considering Kubiak was the offensive coordinator back then.

"Peyton can fit into this of-

fense very easily," Elway said. "It's very dependent on balance. Peyton won't have to throw the ball 50 or 55 times. That gets more helpful, the older you get." Would Manning be willing to shoulder less of the load? That's yet another question lingering, as the Manning Watch nears its seventh week in Denver.

Manning, who will be 39 when next season starts, would need to pass a physical before the start of the next league year, which begins March 10.

That seems like a deadline of sorts for Manning and the Broncos, because Manning's \$19 million would become guaranteed at that time. But Elway wouldn't even agree with that assumption.

"There's no rush," he said. "I told Peyton ... Think about what you want to do. He's got all the time he wants." □



Denver Broncos executive vice president John Elway answers a question during a news conference at the NFL football scouting combine in Indianapolis, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

Associated Press



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Tanaka throws 21 pitches in 1st bullpen session of year

TAMPA, Florida (AP) — Masahiro Tanaka has thrown 21 pitches in his first bullpen session of the year at the New York Yankees' minor league complex.

The workout Thursday came one day before Yankees pitchers and catchers report for spring training. Tanaka missed 2½ months last year while rehabilitating a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. He returned for two late-September starts. Neither Tanaka nor New York pitching coach Larry Rothschild spoke with reporters after the session. Tanaka smiled and waved while walking to a car.

Signed to a \$155 million, seven-year contract, Tanaka went 13-5 with a 2.77 ERA in 20 starts □



New York Yankees pitcher Masahiro Tanaka, of Japan, gets loose before throwing a bullpen session while working out at the Yankees' minor league complex Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015, in Tampa, Fla. Associated Press

Column: Best thing about A-Rod apology is it was in cursive

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP Sports Columnist

Alex Rodriguez finally said he was sorry, though his handwritten apology on the eve of his return to the New York Yankees seemed to fall flat.

Not really surprising, but give A-Rod some credit for trying. Doesn't anyone realize how hard it is to write in cursive these days?

Surely it seemed like a nice old-fashioned touch when the scorned slugger sat down to put pen to paper. You could almost picture him laboring over every paragraph - all five of them - while wadding up draft after draft and tossing them into an overflowing wastebasket. Unfortunately, Rodriguez forgot to say exactly what he was apologizing for in his missive. Was it his serial steroid use? His years of defrauding fans? The fact he once dated Madonna?

Maybe next time he could try email. Easier to do, and much more room to get all the sordid details out there. Or spend some of the \$500 million or so he will earn as a baseball player on a public relations firm that might advise him to finally tell the truth.

Apologies can be a hard thing to do, as evidenced by the difficulty Lance Armstrong has with them. He went on with Oprah to confess that he cheated to win all seven of his Tour de France titles in an appearance that was widely panned as staged and bereft of contrition. "I will spend the rest of my life trying to earn back trust and apologize to people," Armstrong told



In this Jan. 16, 2014, file photo, Alex Rodriguez speaks during a news conference in Cancun, Mexico. AP

the talk show host. But it was Armstrong's girlfriend doing the apologizing a few weeks ago after the cyclist hit some parked cars after a party in Aspen. She initially told police she was driving because Armstrong had been drinking, but in the end it was Armstrong who pleaded guilty to careless driving.

Mike Tyson was still recognized as among the baddest men on the planet when he was forced to apologize for biting Evander Holyfield's ear. Unlike A-Rod, Tyson didn't hand write his apology or even write it at all. A former image maker for President Reagan produced it in a desperate attempt to keep Tyson from being banned from boxing for life.

Tyson promised to seek both religious counseling and sessions with a shrink to deal with his anger issues, though Nevada boxing officials didn't seem terribly impressed.

"Something bad happened in the ring," Nevada Athletic Commission chairman Elias Ghanem said at the time. "The apology doesn't change what happened in the ring."

At least Tyson acted quickly. It took Pete Rose 15 years to finally admit he bet on baseball, and only then because he had a book coming out that said just that. Saying he was sorry took years longer, though Rose seems to now be making up for lost time.

As he waits for some indication

from new commissioner Rob Manfred on his possible reinstatement to the game, Rose is autographing baseballs in Las Vegas. For \$299 you can get a ball with the personal inscription "I'm sorry I bet on baseball."

Rodriguez probably won't be reduced to selling apologies on baseballs, if only because he doesn't need the money. By the time he's done playing, he will have made nearly \$500 million, even while taking a hit for sitting out last season because of his role in the Biogenesis scandal.

As Rose did with his gambling, though, he scarred the game by using PEDs, then brazenly using them again after begging for fans to judge him on his future actions. He shamed himself and discredited a Yankees organization built over the years with so much pride by great players who came before him.

Five paragraphs that express regret and say he is sorry aren't enough to make up for that. What Rodriguez should have done - and was invited by the Yankees to do - was hold a news conference, and this time honestly answer the questions he lied about the first time around.

Then he should declare he won't accept the \$6 million bonus in his contract for hitting the six home runs he needs to catch the great Willie Mays on the career list at 660. Because just being mentioned in the same conversation with Mays is something Rodriguez should really be apologizing for. □



New Zealand team from left, Pieter Bulling, Alex Frame, Regan Gough and Dylan Kennett compete during the final of the Men's Team Pursuit race at the Track Cycling World Championships in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, outside Paris, France, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

GREG KELLER
Associated Press
SAINT-QUENTIN-EN-YVE-

Associated Press
LINES, France (AP) — Olympic champions Britain lost to New Zealand in the

New Zealand beats Britain in men's team pursuit final

men's team pursuit final at the track cycling world championships on Thursday.

The all-black clad Kiwi squad of Pieter Bulling, Dylan Kennett, Alex Frame and Marc Ryan took gold in track cycling's marquee event, topping the British foursome with a time of 3:54.088.

Defending champs Australia took bronze.

It was sweet redemption for the New Zealand team after their relegation to silver in the men's team sprint final against France on Wednesday, when officials ruled their first relay

had been a fraction of a second too early.

In the women's team pursuit final, Australia's Ashlee Ankudinoff, Amy Cure, Annette Edmondson and Melissa Hoskins set a new world record time of 4:13.615, smashing the previous mark by nearly three seconds to capture gold over defending champions Britain. Canada took the bronze.

France's Francois Pervis successfully defended his gold medal in the men's keirin race, over Eddie Dawkins of New Zealand. Azizulhasni Awang of Malaysia took bronze. The win

was Pervis' first step in his bid to defend the three gold medals he won at the 2014 world championships. It was France's second gold of these world championships after the men's team sprint win on Wednesday.

Russia's Anastasia Voinova beat world record holder Anna Meares of Australia in the women's 500 meter time trial. Defending champ Miriam Welte of Germany took bronze.

Germany's Lucas Liss won gold in the men's scratch race, over Spain's Albert Torres and Bobby Lea of the United States. □

DeSoto cab company taking on name of mobile app Flywheel

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A San Francisco taxi company is ditching its 82-year-old brand and renaming itself after a smartphone app in the latest sign of how mobile technology is changing the way people get a ride.

The transformation dumps DeSoto Cab's Depression-era identity in favor of Flywheel, an app that helps traditional taxis compete against increasingly popular ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft.

"We think we are pioneering the way taxi cabs need to be in the future," DeSoto President Hansu Kim said in a Wednesday interview. "There is a perception that the taxi industry is backward so we need to recast ourselves as being technologically innovative."

The newly minted Flywheel taxis will be owned and operated independently from the Flywheel app, which is made by a 6-year-old startup in Redwood City, California, a suburb located about 25 miles south of San Francisco.

As part of their makeover,



In this photo taken Feb. 9, 2015, DeSoto cab company shop worker Sal Albowyha applies decals to the first newly rebranded cab under the Flywheel name in San Francisco. Associated Press

DeSoto's 220 taxis are being repainted from navy blue, turquoise and white to red, with the Flywheel name in white.

Flywheel isn't charging DeSoto for adopting its name, according to Flywheel CEO Rakesh Mathur. Instead, Flywheel hopes to profit from the additional exposure that it gains from cabs bearing its name.

Like most of the other

roughly 1,900 taxis licensed in San Francisco, DeSoto's cabs already have been using Flywheel's app to supplement the business that they get from people who hail taxis on the street or from phone calls to their dispatch centers.

The Flywheel app also works with cabs in several other cities, including Los Angeles, Seattle and San Diego.

The Flywheel app will continue to book rides for other San Francisco taxis, and won't give any special preference to its namesake cabs, Mathur said. The ride-booking decisions will be based on whichever taxi is nearest the passenger.

Both Kim and Mathur are hoping that the ubiquity of Flywheel-branded taxis will help more passengers real-

ize that they can use a mobile app to summon a traditional taxi just as easily as they can book a car driven by a contractor operating through Uber or Lyft. Flywheel collects a 10 percent commission on each taxi fare booked through its app and charges passengers an additional \$1.

Although Uber primarily works with cars driven by the vehicle owners looking for extra income, the service also can be used to hail a traditional taxi, too. Uber, in particular, has put a major dent in the taxi industry as more people have embraced its smartphone app and its ride-hailing network of privately owned cars has expanded to more than 250 cities worldwide.

Taxi drivers and companies have lashed out at Uber's success, contending that the service has an unfair advantage because it doesn't play by the same rules as cabs, saving millions of dollars in regulatory fees. Uber depicts its service as a breath of fresh air in a stale industry that had been treating passengers poorly for years. □

NBC channel is now live on PCs, devices in 10 markets

By ANICK JESDANUN

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- Television viewers in 10 U.S. markets are now able to watch their local NBC stations live on computers and mobile devices - as long as they are paying customers.

Although the stations are available for free with an antenna, NBC is limiting its free online streaming to cable and satellite TV subscribers. Viewers will need to sign in with their provider's account information, akin to an approach ABC has taken. CBS doesn't require a cable or satellite subscription, but it charges \$6 a month for its CBS All Access service.

The 10 NBC markets cover New York, Los Angeles and other regions where NBC owns the local station. NBC

affiliates, which carry NBC programs but are owned by others, are expected to be added throughout the year.

Wednesday's announcement comes as television channels look for ways to reach audiences on additional screens. Many cable channels have been offering live and on-demand streaming on personal computers, smartphones and tablets, typically with a cable or satellite TV subscription required.

In requiring a pay-TV subscription, NBC is making it difficult for viewers to drop their cable or satellite service. A few channels, including HBO, Nickelodeon and Showtime, plan to make content available as stand-alone subscriptions. But most channels are tak-

ing the same approach as NBC in making viewers pay as part of a broader subscription package.

NBC viewers in the 10 markets will be able to watch by visiting their local station's website - like <http://www.nbcnewyork.com> in New York - or downloading the station's app on Apple or Android devices. The sites and apps will also offer on-demand content, though local news will be available only live at first. Viewers won't be able to pause or rewind live streams, nor will they be able to watch on regular TVs through apps on streaming devices such as Roku. NBC already live-streams major sports events like the Olympics nationally online and on mobile apps for paying subscribers, and



This Nov. 17, 2009 file photo shows the NBC peacock logo in New York. Television viewers in 10 U.S. markets will be able to watch their local NBC stations on computers and mobile devices, as NBC starts offering live streaming Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015.

that's expected to continue.

But NFL games that play on NBC will be blocked on mobile devices because Verizon has those rights. Hulu will continue to offer on-demand archives of network shows, typically the day after their broadcasts.

The 10 stations available for live streaming are:

- WMAQ in Chicago
- KXAS in Dallas-Fort Worth
- WVIT in Hartford-New Haven, Connecticut
- KNBC in Los Angeles
- KNSD in San Diego
- KNTV in the San Francisco-San Jose
- WTVJ in Miami-Fort Lauderdale
- WNBC in New York
- WCAU in Philadelphia
- WRC in Washington □

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STEVE ROTHWELL
AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A slide in shares of utility companies nudged the U.S. stock market lower Thursday.

Utilities were the day's biggest losers, falling 1 percent, and their losses resumed a trend that emerged in late January. Investors have dumped the dividend-rich stocks as the yield of the U.S. 10-year note creeps higher.

Energy stocks also weighed on the market Thursday. Overall, though, U.S. stocks have rebounded from a January slump. The Standard & Poor's 500 index has reached all-time highs in February, and is on track for its best monthly performance in more than three years. Company earnings are still growing and the economy is continuing to recover.

"The U.S. markets are still in a 'goldilocks' scenario," neither too hot, or too cold, said Jeremy Zirin, chief U.S. equity strategist for UBS Wealth Management Research. "Growth is solid, but not spectacular, and most importantly, not stoking



Traders Sal Suarino, left, and Robert Charmak work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. A slide in shares of utility companies nudged the U.S. stock market lower Thursday. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

ing high levels of inflation." The Standard & Poor's 500 index ended the day down 2.23 points, or 0.11 percent, at 2,097.45. The index is still within a fraction of the all-time high of 2,100.34 reached on Tuesday. The index has gained 5.1 percent in February. If it holds those gains through the end of the month, it would be the strongest performance since October

2011. The Dow Jones industrial average dropped 44.08 points, or 0.2 percent, to 17,985.77. The price of oil fell, though it regained some of its losses when the Energy Department reported that the growth in supplies was less than expected. Benchmark U.S. crude fell 98 cents to close at \$51.16 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, a benchmark for internation-

al oils used by many U.S. refineries, fell 32 cents to close at \$60.21 in London. Technology stocks were among the day's gainers. The sector has outperformed the broader market since the start of the year and the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite has gained 6.2 percent this month. On Thursday, the index rose 18.34 points, or 0.4 percent, to 4,924.70. □

Freddie Mac 4Q profit tumbles, plans to pay dividend

MARCY GORDON
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mortgage giant Freddie Mac posted net income of \$227 million for the fourth quarter, down sharply from the same period of 2013, as it sustained losses on the investments it uses to hedge against swings in interest rates.

Nonetheless, the October-through-December results reported Thursday marked the government-

controlled company's 13th straight profitable quarter. McLean, Virginia-based Freddie also said it will pay a dividend of \$900 million to the U.S. Treasury next month. Freddie will have paid \$91.8 billion in dividends, exceeding its government bailout of \$71.3 billion.

The government rescued Freddie and larger sibling Fannie Mae at the height of the financial crisis in September 2008, after they piled up losses on risky mortgages in the housing market bust.

Together the companies received taxpayer aid totaling \$187.3 billion. Freddie and Fannie own or guarantee about half of all U.S. mortgages, worth about \$5 trillion. Along with other federal agencies, they back roughly 90 percent of new home loans. The two companies don't



This photo shows Freddie Mac's corporate offices in McLean, Va. Freddie Mac reported quarterly financial results on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015.

(AP Photo/Pablo Monsivais)

directly make loans to borrowers. They buy mortgages from lenders, package them as bonds, guarantee them against default and sell them to investors. That helps make loans available. Freddie's fourth-quarter profit was well below the \$8.6 billion it earned in the

same period of 2013. For all of 2014, Freddie reported net income of \$7.7 billion, down from \$48.7 billion in 2013. It was the company's third straight profitable year. The company improved its operations "through innovation and efficiency," Freddie CEO Donald Layton said in a statement. □

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Weimar on the Aegean



PAUL KRUGMAN
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Try to talk about the policies we need in a depressed world economy, and someone is sure to counter with the specter of Weimar Germany, supposedly an object lesson in the dangers of budget deficits and monetary expansion. But the history of Germany after World War I is almost always cited in a curiously selective way. We hear endlessly about the hyperinflation of 1923, when people carted around wheelbarrows full of cash, but we never hear about the much more relevant deflation of the early 1930s, as the government of Chancellor Brüning - having learned the wrong lessons - tried to defend Germany's peg to gold with tight money and harsh austerity.

And what about what happened before the hyperinflation, when the victorious Allies tried to force Germany to pay huge reparations? That's also a tale with a lot of modern relevance, because it has a direct bearing on the crisis now brewing over Greece.

The point is that now, more than ever, it is crucial that Europe's leaders remember the right history. If they don't, the European project of peace and democracy through prosperity will not survive.

About those reparations: The basic story here is that Britain and France, instead of viewing the newly established German democracy as a potential partner, treated it as a conquered enemy, demanding that it make up their own wartime losses. This was deeply unwise - and the demands placed on Germany were impossible to meet, for two reasons. First, Germany's economy had already been devastated by the war. Second, the true burden on that shrunken economy would - as John Maynard Keynes explained in his angry, powerful book "The Economic Consequences of the Peace" - be far greater than the direct payments to the vengeful Allies. In the end, and inevitably, the actual sums collected from Germany fell far short of Allied demands. But the attempt to levy tribute on a ruined nation - incredibly, France actually invaded and occupied the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, in an effort to extract payment - crippled German democracy and poisoned relations with its neighbors.

Which brings us to the confrontation between Greece and its creditors.

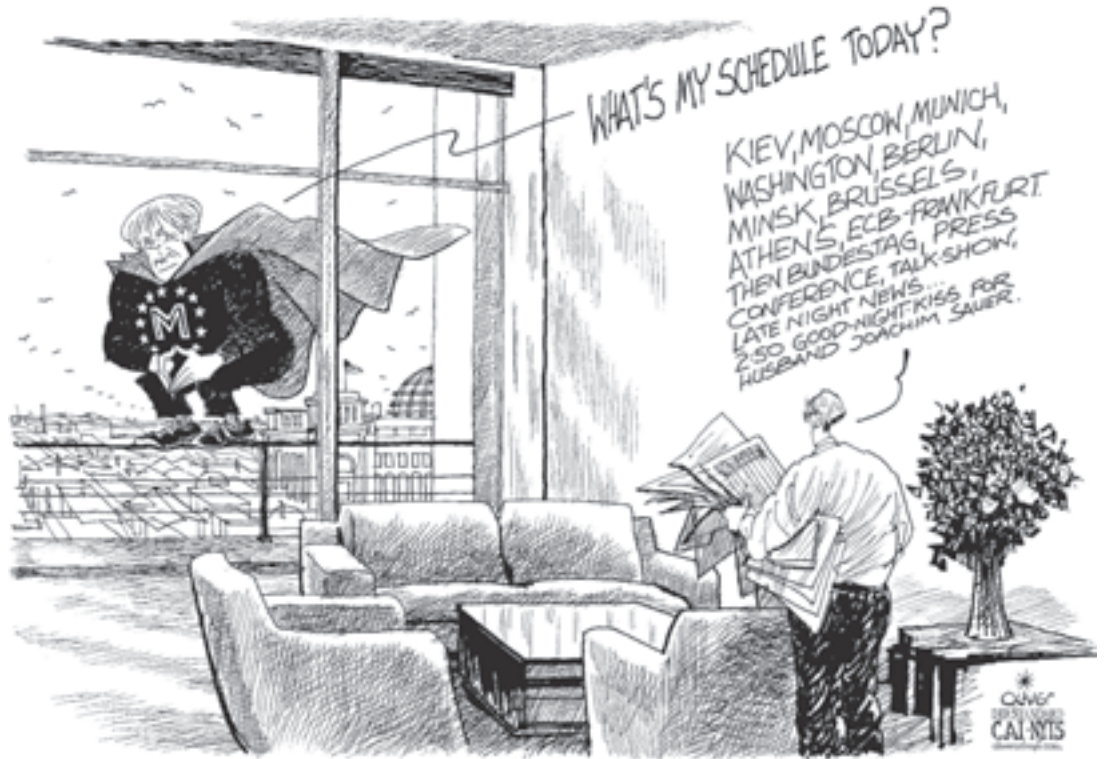
You can argue that Greece brought its problems on itself, although it had a lot of help from irresponsible lenders. At this point, however, the simple fact is that Greece cannot pay its debts in full. Austerity has devastated its economy as thoroughly as military defeat devastated Germany - real Greek gross domestic product per capita fell 26 percent from 2007 to 2013, compared with a German decline of 29 percent from 1913 to 1919.

Despite this catastrophe, Greece is making payments to its creditors, running a primary surplus - an excess of revenue over spending other than interest - of around 1.5 percent of GDP. And the new Greek government is willing to keep running that surplus. What it is not willing to do is meet creditor demands that it triple the surplus, and keep running huge surpluses for many years to come.

What would happen if Greece were to try to generate those huge surpluses? It would have to further slash government spending - but that wouldn't be the end of the story. Spending cuts have already driven Greece into a deep depression, and further cuts would make that depression deeper. Falling incomes would, however, mean falling tax receipts, so that the deficit would decline by much less than the initial reduction in spending - probably less than half as much. To meet its target, then, Greece would have to do another round of cuts, and then another. Furthermore, a shrinking economy would lead to falling private spending too - another, indirect cost of the austerity. Put it all together, and attempting to cough up the extra 3 percent of GDP the creditors are demanding would cost Greece not 3 percent, but something like 8 percent of GDP. And remember, this would come on top of one of the worst economic slumps in history.

What would happen if Greece were simply to refuse to pay? Well, 21st-century European nations don't use their armies as bill collectors. But there are other forms of coercion. We now know that in 2010 the European Central Bank threatened, in effect, to collapse the Irish banking system unless Dublin agreed to an International Monetary Fund program. The threat of something similar hangs implicitly over Greece, although my hope is that the central bank, which is under different and more open-minded management these days, wouldn't go along.

In any case, European creditors should realize that flexibility - giving Greece a chance to recover - is in their own interests. They may not like the new leftist government, but it's a duly elected government whose leaders are, from everything I've heard, sincerely committed to democratic ideals. Europe could do a lot worse - and if the creditors are vengeful, it will. □



A Kaffeeklatsch on Race



CHARLES M. BLOW
© 2015 New York Times

In our collective imaginations, we tend to conceive of the constantly called-for "national conversation on race" as having the formality of some grand conclave of consciousness - an American Truth and Reconciliation equivalent, a spiritual spectacle in which sins are confessed and blame taken and burdens lifted.

This may be ideal, but it is also exceedingly unlikely in this country, particularly in this political environment. There will be no great atoning. Reparations will not be paid. There will no sprawling absolution.

Yet we can still have a productive conversation. Indeed, I would argue that we are in the midst of a national conversation about race at this very moment. Its significance isn't drawn from structure but from the freedom of its form.

Every discussion over a backyard fence or a cup of coffee is part of that conversation. It is the very continuity of its casualness that bolsters its profundity.

We need to stop calling for the conversation and realize that we are already having it.

Last week the FBI director, James Comey, added his voice to that conversation, particularly as it relates to the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. There were portions I

found particularly potent coming from a man in his position.

He gave a list of "hard truths," the first of which was an admission that the history of law enforcement in this country was not only part of the architecture of oppression but also a brutal tool of that system. As Comey put it, "One reason we cannot forget our law enforcement legacy is that the people we serve and protect cannot forget it, either." His second hard truth acknowledged the existence of unconscious racial bias "in our white-majority culture" and how that influences policing.

Third, he acknowledged that people in law enforcement can develop "different flavors of cynicism" that can be "lazy mental shortcuts," resulting in more pronounced racial profiling.

But as in all discussions, there were portions of the speech to which I took exception.

First, Comey seems to falsely conflate condemnation of poor policing - sometimes predatory policing, in particular - with a condemnation of all policing. He makes a straw man argument, "Law enforcement is not the root cause of problems in our hardest hit neighborhoods." Who said it was?

This is a twisting of motive and purpose of the voices of recent protesters that undermines and mischaracterizes both. Minority communities want policing the same as any other, but they want it to be appropriate and proportional. They want not to be afraid of the cops as well as the criminals. They want officers to display an equitable modicum of discernment in treating the law-abiding differently from the law-breaking.

The discussion is not about police officers being a "root cause of problems" in a given neighborhood, but rather that they shouldn't be a problem at all, anywhere. We are not geographically confined. We can move in and out of high-crime neighborhoods. We can't move

in and out of our own skin.

At another point, Comey states that cynicism "becomes almost irresistible and maybe even rational by some lights." This is dangerous and unconditionally false. "Lazy mental shortcuts" - in other words, racial profiling - isn't rational in any light. It violates not only an American principle but also a human one: that no person should be punished for the crimes or sins of another.

His fourth hard truth focused on how crimes among "many young men of color become part of that officer's life experience." But in seeking to offer context, he mentioned "environments lacking role models, adequate education, and decent employment." Here he moves perilously close to a racial pathology argument, as if there were something inherent in blackness and black culture that predisposes one to criminality. This, too, is a "lazy mental shortcut."

What too few people mention when discussing crime is the degree to which concentrated poverty, hopelessness and despair are the chambermaids of violence and incivility. These factors are developed and maintained through a complicated interplay of structural biases - historical and current - interpersonal biases, environmental reinforcements and personal choices.

Even as I disagree on portions, I take the larger point, and I applaud the endeavor and its purpose. Comey seems to be making a genuine effort to be part of the conversation and the solution, and that is more than I can say for some.

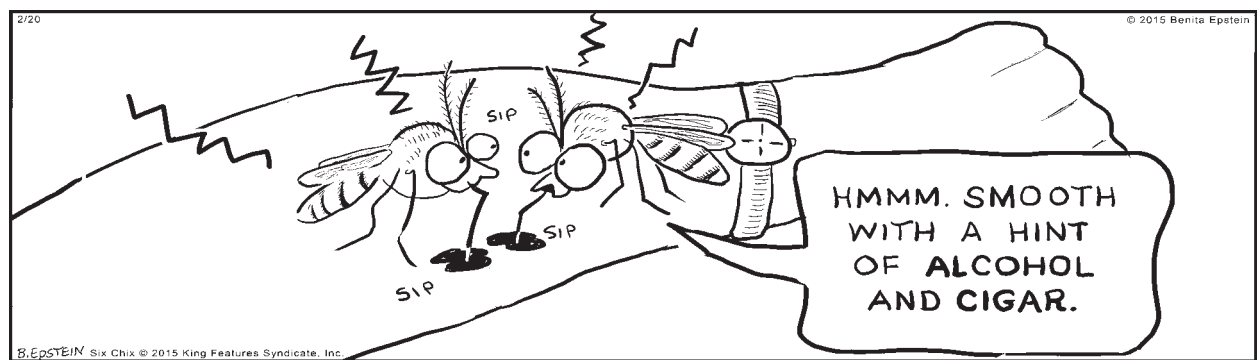
One doesn't have to possess the certitude of gospel to have a positive impact on this discussion - for themselves and others. Just an earnest desire for insight and mutual understanding.

This is more than one can say of the hard of heart, those resistant to engagement and, therefore, beyond enlightenment. The stone cannot absorb no matter how much you drench it. □

Mutts



6 Chix



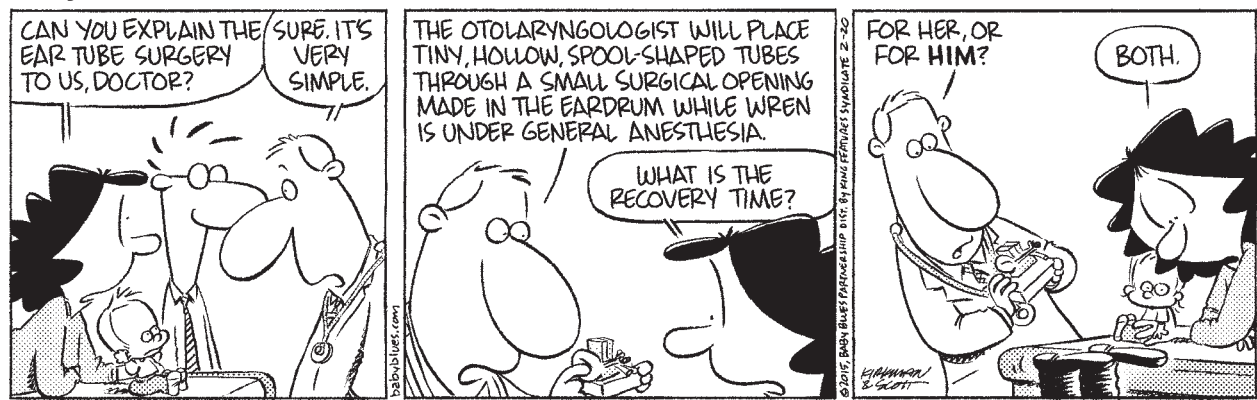
Blondie



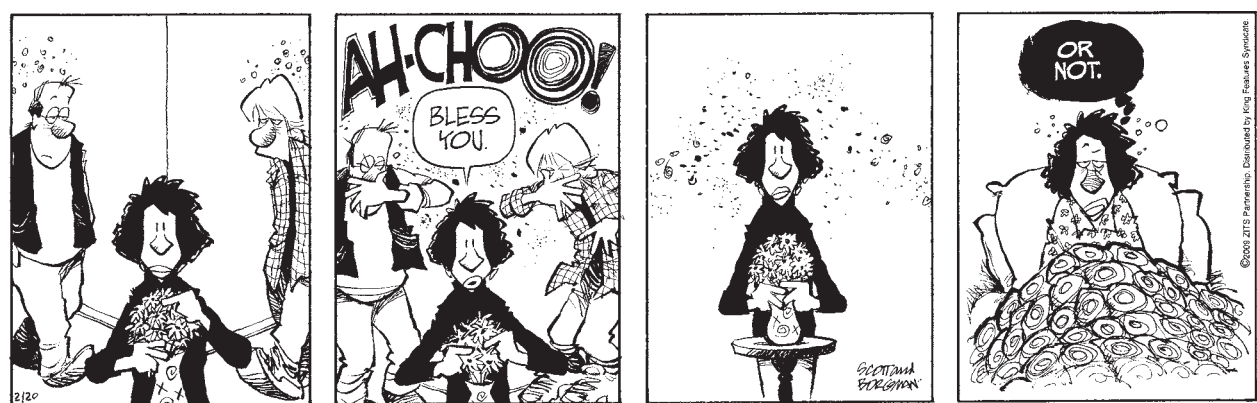
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	1	3				5	2	
6			9		4			7
2	3						7	8
				5				
8	7						4	5
7			4		5			6
	6	8				3	1	

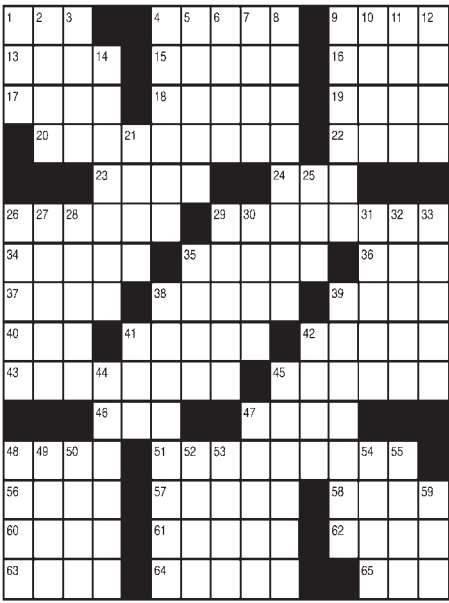
Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 2/20

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

1	2	8	7	3	5	6	9	4
3	5	7	4	9	6	2	1	8
6	9	4	2	8	1	5	3	7
5	8	2	1	4	3	9	7	6
7	3	9	5	6	2	8	4	1
4	6	1	8	7	9	3	2	5
8	1	3	9	5	4	7	6	2
2	7	6	3	1	8	4	5	9
9	4	5	6	2	7	1	8	3

ACROSS

- 1 Unnecessary commotion
4 San Antonio tourist stop
9 "It is what ____"
13 "____ up!"; cry to a fast-walking companion
15 More modern
16 Zero
17 "What's My ____?" of old TV
18 Work bread dough
19 Early guitar
20 "Beat it!"
22 Sitting upon
23 Spoils
24 Jog or trot
26 Huns' leader
29 Con artist
34 Gleaming
35 Thick-skinned critter, for short
36 Actor Wallach
37 Picture card
38 Regretting
39 Sheep cries
40 Has ____ on one's face; is embarrassed
41 Free-for-all
42 Keep a cooking turkey moist
43 At any time
45 Bother
46 "____ Miss"; nickname for a university
47 Fence opening
48 Messy person
51 Self-____ confidence
56 ____ list; paper full of chores
57 Lawful
58 New York team
60 In the sack
61 Escape
62 Part of a foot
63 Promising; hopeful
64 Like most capitol roofs
65 Definite article



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 2/20/15

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

DOWN

- 1 Hole-making tool
2 Speaker's platform
3 Pig's cry
4 Turkey's capital
5 Gives to a borrower
6 Floored
7 Lunch or dinner
8 Telling a waiter what you'd like
9 Not near the ocean
10 Praise highly
11 3 ____ 15 is 5
12 Leak out
14 Abounding
21 Tyne or Tim
25 Family card game
26 Lopsided
27 Part of the leg
28 Slight coloring
29 More bashful
30 Merlot or rosé
31 Minimum
32 Gladden

TROD	ATA	LL	MOSS
ROME	TIBIA	INTO	
ODES	OPENS	SCAN	
TENPINS	DEALERS		
ALE	VERNE		
ANVIL	DON	NACHO	
HEIR	BUY	ZODIAC	
ERR	RUNAWAY	GIT	
AVALON	GAP	CAFE	
DELAY	TEX	KARAT	
WAVER	HIP		
SKILLED	CAMELOT		
PACE	SITAR	LIVE	
ALAS	URNS	LEES	
TENS	SMASH	AUNT	

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- 33 Staircase piece
35 Reign
38 Showed
39 Barkless dog
41 Singer ____ Tillis
42 Greek letter
44 Nary a soul
45 Went separate ways
47 Director; leader
48 Polaris or Vega
49 Gray wolf
50 Lyric poems
52 Fodder tower
53 Bathtub ring
54 Copper coin
55 Carve in glass
59 That girl

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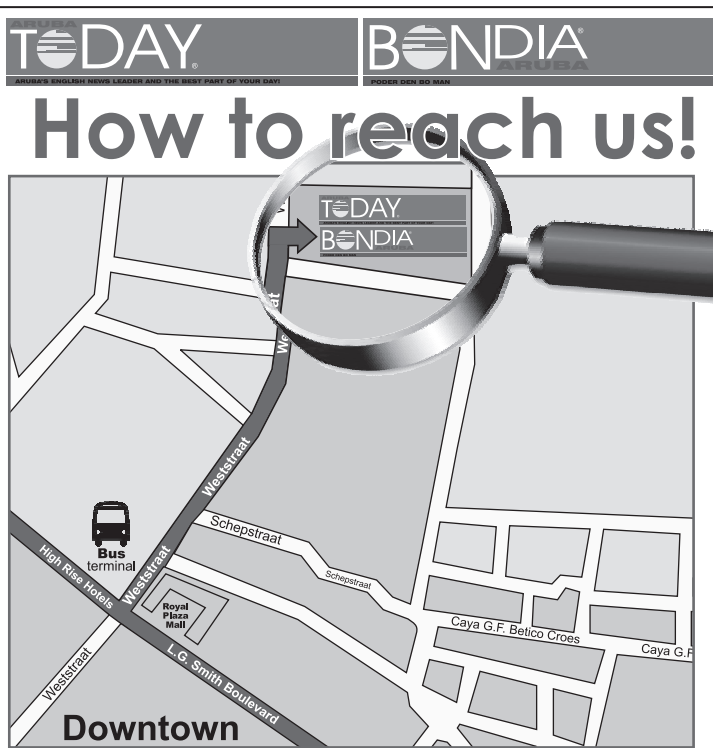
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24/7

Israel unveils its largest find of medieval gold coins



This photo shows a detail of Fatimid period gold coins that were found in the seabed in the Mediterranean Sea near the port of Caesarea National Park in Caesarea, Israel, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015. **Associated Press**

ARIEL SCHALIT
Associated Press
CAESAREA, Israel (AP)

— Israel on Wednesday unveiled the largest collection of medieval gold coins ever found in the country, accidentally discovered by amateur divers and dating back about a thousand years. The find was made two weeks ago near the Israeli port city of Caesarea and consists of some 2,000 coins, weighing about 6 kilograms (13 pounds), the Israel Antiquities Authority said. The coins were likely swept up in recent storms, said Kobi Sharvit, director of the authority's marine archaeology unit, adding that they provided "fascinating and rare historical evidence" from the Fatimid era in the 10th and 11th centuries. The divers initially thought they had spot-

ted toy coins but later showed a few of them to officials. Marine archeologists, using metal detectors, then found the larger haul with coins of various denominations, dimensions and weight. The divers handed over all the coins. Sharvit said they probably came from a boat that sank on its way to deliver tax money to Egypt or from a merchant ship trading among Mediterranean coastal cities. He said archeologists hope further excavations at the site of the find will make it possible "to supplement our understanding of the entire archaeological context, and thus answer the many questions that still remain unanswered about the treasure." Robert Kool, the Israel Antiquities Authority's curator of coins, said

the find was in excellent condition. The coins did not require any cleaning or conservation despite having been at the bottom of the sea for about a millennium. "Gold is a noble metal and is not affected by air or water," he said. "Several of the coins that were found in the assemblage were bent and exhibit teeth and bite marks, evidence they were 'physically' inspected by their owners or the merchants." The earliest coin exposed in the treasure was a quarter dinar minted in Palermo, Sicily, in the second half of the 9th century. Most of the coins, though, appear to have belonged to the Fatimid caliphs Al-ʿAkim and his son Al-ʿAḥir and minted later. The Fatimid kingdom ruled Northern Africa, beginning in the 10th century. □

Physicist whose work helped world see 1st moon walk dies



In this April 25, 1979, file photo, Dr. Ernest Sternglass, a professor of radiological physics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, talks about the dosimeters worn by workers and newsmen during the crisis at Three Mile Island, in Pittsburgh. **Associated Press**

ITHACA, N.Y. (AP) -- Physicist Ernest Sternglass, whose research helped make it possible for the world to see the first moon walk, has died at age 91 of heart failure. His research helped lead to a sensitive television camera tube that captured low-light lunar action during the 1969 moon landing and U.S. astronaut Neil Armstrong's historic first steps. Sternglass also conducted pioneering work in digital X-ray imaging during a long tenure at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, according to Cornell University, where Sternglass attended school and where his papers are archived. Sternglass died Feb. 12 in Ithaca, New York, Cornell said. He was born in 1923 and fled Nazi Germany with his family in 1938. As a 23-year-old Cornell graduate, he was working at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory in Washington,

D.C., when he wrote to Albert Einstein in 1947 to offer an explanation on a scientific matter. To his surprise, he was invited to the famous scientist's home in Princeton, New Jersey. Einstein told the young researcher not to pursue a career in theoretical physics and advised him to, instead, "always keep a cobbler's job" and do useful things. Sternglass went on to earn his master's degree and his doctorate in applied and engineering physics from Cornell. He was among the early scientists concerned with the health effects of atomic bomb testing. In 1963, he presented testimony to the Senate Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty hearing comparing atmospheric bomb testing with an unsafe level of X-ray exposure. Sternglass's second wife died in 2004. He is survived by a son, a daughter and four grandchildren. □

Actress Allison Williams defends her dad, Brian

NEW YORK (AP) — Actress Allison Williams is defending her dad, suspended NBC anchor Brian Williams, as a good man who cares deeply about integrity in journalism.

The "Girls" actress, who played Peter Pan on NBC in December, was asked by Seth Meyers during an appearance Wednesday night how her family has been holding up since her father's career was put in jeopardy by questions about how truthful he is telling stories about his job and life.

"This has been a really hard time," said Williams,

who added that the family is counting its blessings for health and is appreciative of people who have reached out to offer support.

"One thing this experience has not done is shake my trust and belief in him as a man," said Williams, who appeared with Meyers at the 92nd Street Y in New York. "He's a really good man, he's an honest man, he's a truthful man. He has so much integrity and cares



In this Feb. 18, 2015 file photo, Allison Williams attends the Miranda Eyewear Collection launch event, hosted by Michael Kors in New York.

Associated Press

so much about journalism." She called him "a really good dad, and I know you can trust him, because as any good daughter does, I have tested him on that so many times."

NBC suspended Brian Williams for six months for telling a false story about being on a helicopter hit by an enemy grenade during the war in Iraq, and is looking into other claims he has made during interviews and appearances. □

Eddie Murphy said no to Cosby sketch, SNL cast member says

FRAZIER MOORE

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A lingering letdown for fans after Eddie Murphy's half-hearted display on the recent "Saturday Night Live" bash has been rekindled by a report of what might have been: Murphy impersonating Bill Cosby.

In a series of tweets, former "SNL" cast member Norm Macdonald described plans for Murphy to play the embattled Cosby in the "Celebrity Jeopardy" sketch seen on Sunday's "SNL 40th Anniversary Special."

A Video Daily Double

question on Favorite Cocktails would have brought up a "video clip" of Murphy mimicking Cosby behind a bar.

Will Ferrell as host Alex Trebek would then cut it off in embarrassment, explaining the "clip" was taped last June — months before the ongoing scandal exploded amid allegations that Cosby served dozens of women drugged cocktails and then sexually assaulted them.

"Eddie Murphy doing a perfect Cosby impression," tweets Macdonald outlining how the sketch would



In this Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015 file photo, Paige Butcher, left, and Eddie Murphy attend the SNL 40th Anniversary Special at Rockefeller Plaza in New York.

Associated Press

have gone. "The audience does not let him finish. The sketch ends. The show, for all intents, ends."

The challenge, according to Macdonald, was persuading Murphy to take part. "We talk in his dressing room a good hour. When it's over, I'm convinced he'll do it."

"He doesn't."

"Eddie decides the laughs are not worth it. He will not kick a man when he is down."

As viewers know, the sketch did go on, although, rather than Murphy, the role of Cosby was played by

"SNL" cast member Kenan Thompson.

The presence of Murphy on the 3 1/2-hour special was billed as a highlight among the dozens of "SNL" alums and other celebs who were involved. It was his first return since 1984 to the show where he became the breakout star. But his participation was limited to a few awkward words of thanks for the standing ovation he received in Studio 8H after a lavish intro by former "SNL" cast member Chris Rock. Many viewers were left disappointed and perplexed. □

Smithsonian TV documentary, box set celebrate Lead Belly

CHARLES J. GANS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Hud-die "Lead Belly" Ledbetter never had a hit record before he died of Lou Gehrig's disease in 1949. But the folksinging legend, who is being celebrated next week as part of Black History Month by the Smithsonian with a TV documentary and 5-CD box set, left behind a treasure trove of recordings that yielded many hits for those who followed him.

Just months after his death, the folk group The Weavers, featuring his close friend Pete Seeger, hit No. 1 on the pop charts with his theme song "Good Night Irene," which he first

recorded in 1933 while an inmate at Louisiana's notorious Angola State Prison by father-and-son musicologists John and Alan Lomax. Among those inspired by Lead Belly was Lonnie Donegan, the founding father of British pop, who had a big hit with his sped-up version of "Rock Island Line." Donegan inspired British teens to form skiffle groups, including 15-year-old John Lennon who founded The Quarrymen in 1956 and later added Paul McCartney and George Harrison to the band.

"George Harrison once said, 'No Lead Belly, no Lonnie Donegan. Therefore no Lead Belly, no Beatles,'" said John Reynolds, author

of "Lead Belly: A Life in Pictures." Reynolds is among the experts, family members and musicians interviewed in the documentary, "Legend of Lead Belly," which premieres Monday at 8 p.m. EST on the Smithsonian Channel.

"It shows the far-reaching influence his music has all over the world," said Reynolds. "There's been nobody that has a repertoire quite like Lead Belly. He really knew about 500 songs and was like a human juke box. ... He's more relevant than ever. Jack White sings his songs, so did Kurt Cobain and some rappers like Wycliffe Jean."

The documentary features interviews with musicians

inspired by Lead Belly, including Roger McGuinn (The Byrds), Eric Burdon (The Animals), Judy Collins and Van Morrison, who says the message of Lead Belly's story is "survival ... against all odds."

For Lead Belly, the son of a Louisiana sharecropper, his music was a ticket out of the oppressive racism of the Jim Crow South — including doing hard labor for nearly 10 years in prisons in Texas for murdering a cousin in a fight over a woman and Louisiana for stabbing a white man in a fight — that eventually took him to the political folk music scene in New York with Woody Guthrie and Seeger.



This image released courtesy of the Lead Belly Estate shows folk and blues musician Hud-die William Ledbetter, better known as Lead Belly.

Associated Press

Continued on next page

Oscar spotlight draws attention to industry diversity issue

JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It was a year ago that Lupita Nyong'o, shortly before winning the Academy Award for best supporting actress in "12 Years a Slave," gave a speech about what she called "dark beauty." Nyong'o, who so dazzled Hollywood and the Oscar-viewing public through awards season, spoke tenderly of receiving a letter from a girl who had been about to lighten her skin before Nyong'o's success, she said, "saved me." The letter struck Nyong'o because she recognized herself in that girl: "I remember a time when I too felt unbeautiful. I put on the TV and only saw pale skin." The Mexican-born, Kenyan-raised actress was a central part last year to an Academy Awards flush with faces uncommon to the Oscar podium. What a difference a year makes. This year's Oscars repeat a stubborn pattern that has plagued the Academy Awards throughout its history: Whenever change seems to come, a frustrating hangover follows. "Every 10 years, we have the same conversation," Spike Lee, a regular witness to the sporadic progress, has said. Seldom have such fits and starts been starker than this Oscars, coming a year after a richly diverse Oscar crop. In Sunday's Academy Awards, all 20 acting nominees are white, a result that prompted some to declare that they would boycott this year's ceremony. The lack of nominations for "Selma" director Ava DuVernay and star David Oyelowo were a particular

flashpoint, viewed by many as unjust oversights not only because they merited honoring, but because their absences furthered an ignominious Oscar history. "I was surprised but then I wasn't," said Darnell Hunt, a UCLA professor and director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, who co-authored a 2014 diversity report on the film and TV industries.

"What we saw in terms of the nominations this year was business as usual. What we got was more or less an accurate reflection of the way the industry is structured and the way the academy is populated." An Associated Press survey of the academy's voting history since the first Academy Awards in 1929 shows gradual progress but not nearly at a rate to match the ever-increasing diversity of the American public. In those 87 years, 15 black actors have won Oscars, four Latinos and three Asians, a record that doesn't even speak to other categories like best director, where only one woman (Kathryn Bigelow) has won. The number of non-whites to be nominated for best actor or best actress has nearly doubled in just the last two decades, but the 9.4 percent of non-white acting nominees over the academy's history is about four times less than the percentage of the non-white population. Not all of this can be laid at the film academy's feet, but some of it can. The 6,000-plus membership of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences was found to be 94 percent white and 77 percent male in a 2012 Los Angeles Times



In this March 2, 2014 file photo, Lupita Nyong'o accepts the award for best actress in a supporting role for "12 Years a Slave" during the Oscars in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

investigation. Since becoming president of the academy, Cheryl Boone Isaacs has worked to diversify the organization's ranks, though change comes slowly considering membership is for life. But the academy is a reflection of the film industry; it can only reward the films that get made. What this year's all-white acting nominees did was lay bare the enormous, hulking iceberg of the movie business' diversity problems. The UCLA diversity report released last year after eight years of research put found underrepresentation of minorities and women throughout film and TV, from board rooms to talent agencies. "White males have dominated things for so long that it's been hard to imagine an alternative that would produce or be open to producing the types of projects that are likely to enlist more people of color

or women. So it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, this vicious cycle that produces the same type of stuff over and over again," says Hunt. What's particularly galling for many of those working to change Hollywood is that minorities are among its most passionate customers. "They acknowledge the demographic. They understand our participation rate. They continue to market these projects to the community, but never with the community's identity or building a base of A-list talent," says Felix Sanchez, president of the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts. Hunt hopes that by studying diversity objectively, the data will reveal "the bottlenecks" that are stifling advancement. That includes findings that show more diverse projects make more money at the box office and earn better TV ratings.

He knows the one thing Hollywood will respond to: the bottom line. But frustration is mounting. Another year's worth of research, to be released later this month by UCLA, shows no significant change, says Hunt. Stacy L. Smith, founder and director of USC Annenberg's Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative, calls the lack of progress in the industry "egregious." "Hollywood does not think diversity is commercial," Smith said. "The numbers speak loudly and clearly about who is valued and who isn't." With studies finding so little progress, Smith proposes the industry adopt a modified version of the NFL's Rooney Rule, which stipulates that teams must interview minorities for vacant coaching jobs. Not everyone agrees. "Enforced 'diversity' will undermine the very mission of (the academy)," wrote Lionel Chetwynd, an Oscar-nominated writer and an academy member. "As new filmmakers and craftspeople achieve new levels of excellence, the face of the academy will change as it should, to the meter of its time, the pace of its art." Why does all this matter? It isn't just an issue of equal opportunity, though it is that. It's because when people aren't reflected in culture, when they don't see themselves on screens, behind cameras or on the Oscar stage, they feel invisible and voiceless. Hollywood would do well to remember that young girl who wrote to Nyong'o, and hope to inspire a flood of such letters. □

Leadbelly

Continued from page 29

The documentary is being aired on the eve of Tuesday's release of "Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection," the most comprehensive collection of recordings by the iconic artist. It spans his entire recording career from the Lomaxes' 1933 prison re-

cordings to his last 1948 sessions in the apartment of jazz scholar Fred Ramsey Jr. The 108 tracks include 16 previously unreleased recordings — including radio programs from 1941 that feature his rarely recorded song intros. Among the discoveries is an original song, "Princess Elizabeth," celebrating the marriage of the future British queen. Producer Jeff Place hopes

the collection enables people to look past the prison story the Lomaxes embellished to market Lead Belly — that he sang his way out of prison with pardon songs to the governors of Texas and Louisiana. Instead, he wants people to focus on his musical contributions. Lead Belly was a powerful singer and a skilled guitarist. He picked up the rarely used 12-string

Stella guitar because it was loud enough to be heard in noisy bars, his style influencing Seeger, McGuinn, Bonnie Raitt and Ry Cooder. Place says Lead Belly was a "songster." He played blues, spirituals, work and prison songs reflecting his life experience in the South. But his recordings also include cowboy songs, children's rhymes, old British ballads, and topical songs

he wrote about the Hindenburg and Titanic disasters. Rather than being the "discovery" of folklorists, Lead Belly was a folklorist in his own right, said Place, senior archivist and curator of the Smithsonian folklife collections. "He spent his whole life collecting an amazing assortment of songs in his travels, recording some of them so we have them now ... He was like a human tape-recorder." □



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